The Spirit Lovers:

by

M. Y. Halidom

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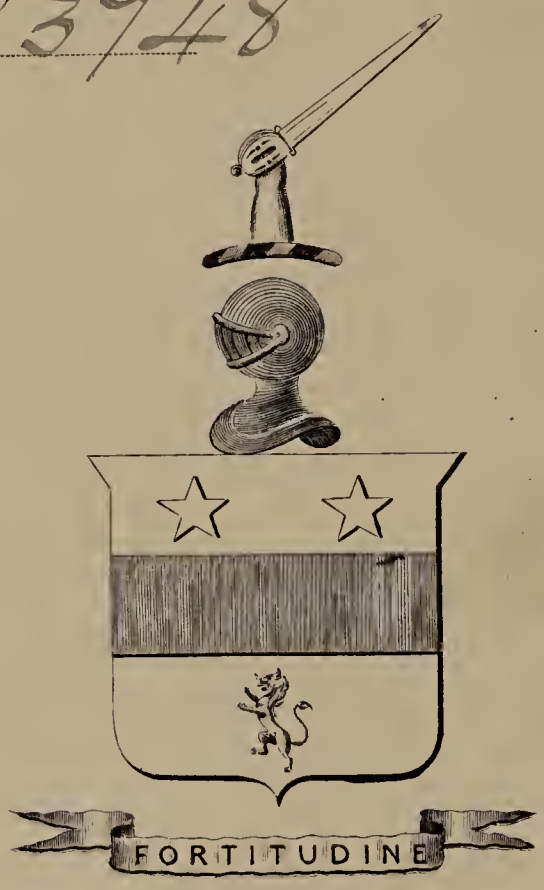

William Mc Ilwraith.

THE SPIRIT LOVERS

And other Stories

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PRESERVED BY

M. Y. HALIDOM

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PREFACE

THE stories contained in this volume are some of many written by one, Sir Archibald Graham, Baronet, in his early life—that period existing from the last year of a man's university career and which extends usually to the day of his accepting the bonds of matrimony. In fact, these stories which he wrote were the cause of his meeting with his wife—the sister of his bosom friend and old college chum, who carried home from his office the said volume, it being an advance copy sent to him by the author.

Their publication never actually took place, as a warehouse fire destroyed the remainder of the edition on the eve of publication.

His succession to the title and heritage was soon followed by his marriage. The Knoll had remained for centuries past the family seat of the Grahams of Heatherdale. It was a grand old pile of very ancient date, many parts of it bearing strong

traces of an early Tudor restoration. It was deeply moated with drawbridge, and, like most old places, had its traditional ghost, though of late years this had not been seen nor heard of.

A year after the bringing home of his bride to the Knoll, she gave birth to a daughter and left Sir Archibald a widower. His daughter, placed in the hands of a foster-mother, a good woman named Humphry, grew up a lovable girl under her tender care. She was highly educated—so far as a governess will admit, and possessing her mother's romantic temperament was fond of reading, and that mostly fiction. Her indulgent parent, now with his whole love centred on her, complied with her every request. She wished to be taught drawing and painting. For this, a young artist of good family, though poor, was engaged, and the lessons in drawing, landscape, and portraiture were eagerly looked forward to by both master and pupil.

The Baronet, a man of great sporting tastes, devoted most of his time to fresh air and exercise. Whilst he hunted, Amanda would draw. While he raced, she and her master would landscape, and talk poetry as well as painting.

The elopement of his daughter, which happened whilst he deemed his presence necessary at a

distant race meeting, had such an effect upon him that his mind apparently became unhinged. He abandoned all kinds of outdoor amusement and shut himself up, leaving all business and that of the estate entirely to the care of his steward, preferring to lead the life of a misanthrope. Each day for years he was to be found in his study, sitting over the fire, its one solitary occupant. The one solitary high back chair of carved oak almost hiding his form from those few servants who attended on him. Ever given to soliloquy—deploring the present day thirst for romance—the disobedience of children, by thwarting all arrangements, by forming misalliances with "painter-fellows who had been employed out of charity—and vowing never to forgive his Amanda." This vow formed part of all the soliloquies in which he had indulged for the past fifteen years.

It was on the fifteenth anniversary of her departure, as he sat even more determined in his feelings towards her, that he became aware of her portrait hanging upon the opposite wall. This evidently had been placed there that morning by his faithful retainer—the foster-mother of Amanda—who at that moment entered with an armful of Christmas decorations. She met the full force of her master's disapproval, and was ordered with

the portrait and "peace and goodwill" emblems from his presence.

No sooner had she departed, drying her tears fallen upon the picture of her "dove," than a liveried servant appeared with a letter for the Baronet, the envelope deeply edged with black. Whilst fingering and eyeing it abstractedly, the handwriting of his daughter struck him and sat him bolt upright. With eager fingers he broke the seal and read from her the first information which had been imparted to him for years, acquainting him of "the death of her husband after prolonged illness, brought on through his inability to maintain his wife and six children," and further stating "that the drain on her resources caused by his funeral had left her entirely destitute."

Looking up from the letter he fancied her picture still on the wall before him, and, in fancy viewing it, broke into tears, melting all determinations made respecting forgiveness and disinheritance. With drying eyes his better nature prevailed, prompting him to ring for his housekeeper. After apologising for his late harshness he handed her the letter to read, which, of course, roused her motherly feelings. With the return of good feeling on the part of the Baronet, the quick decision of his old "sportsman" days prompted

him to order his carriage that he might be driven to the train without a moment's delay. Here a certain amount of awkwardness presented itself, owing to the fact that his equipage and stable had been dispensed with soon after the flight of Amanda. However, this difficulty was surmounted by Humphry's suggestion that her husband should drive him to the station in the market cart. To this the Baronet agreed, and was safely conveyed to the train for which he had to wait, the only passenger, one hour. We next see him at the Knoll, returned, smiling, with his daughter and her family of six. Upon all it was plainly discernible that the purse of the grandfather had fully equipped them in decent mourning. Amanda, sorrowful, yet happy in the thought that all bad feeling was passed, wept on her old nurse, and handed to her the infant she had carried from London. The Baronet, with three of the other children passed in a cluster into their new home, followed by its next male heir, Charles, a lad of fourteen, accompanied by his sister Maud, a bright sunny faced, blue-eyed girl of some twelve summers. Through his amazement at this change of abode from the poor West London top-floor, the boy remarked, "that grandpa was not a bad sort in fact, he was a jolly fine old chap."

When the door closed on the new arrivals, those of the estate who had assembled to give happy welcome found that they had progressed no further in it than the opening of their eyes and mouth, and were left to depart with fingers scratching under cap, accompanied by "Fancy now! and who'd ha' thought it?"

This return to the Knoll in time for all Christmas festivities was greatly appreciated by the whole estate.

The festivities over, and the younger generation now in the hands of nursemaids, things assumed a happy and changed aspect in their new routine.

The grandson, Charles, of a vivacious and inquiring turn, amused himself by wandering about the house, and, in the course of his peregrinations, examining every panel and every knot in the wood thereof. One knot seemed, by its peculiar protrusion, to be of greater interest than others, and by way of marking the same he pressed it. When, to his infinite surprise, it retreated at his touch and the panel next to it immediately flew back and opened to his especial delectation the haunted chamber, which for years had not been thought of by any but the Baronet, who had used it as a secret lumber room.

It was noticed that each day the boy Charles

absented himself from the rest of the family, which absence was complained of by the younger children bursting in upon their mother and grandfather one bright morning, requesting the latter personage, whom they considered their especial property, "to come out and make them a snow man, because Charley, who had promised them, was lost." Before entering upon this unusual undertaking, the grandfather, at the alarm exhibited by the mother, thought it advisable to institute a search for the missing scion of the house. Heading the search, his instinct led him to an unfrequented part of the building, where he found the young hopeful in the ghost chamber, begrimed with dust, but deeply intent in a book which, on further inspection by his mother and grandfather, proved to be "stories of spooks, ghosts, etc.," by one "Archibald Graham," the only volume saved of the large edition burned, and which, to appease the son and heir and eldest daughter, the mother had to read to them and the author (now Sir Archibald Graham, Baronet) each evening until the hour when Humphry and bed-time came.

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THE SPIRIT LOVERS

WHEN I was yet a young practitioner I had already a numerous circle of patients, out of which it will be only necessary for me to bring two cases before you this evening. The first was that of a young man of about four-and-twenty, whom I shall call Charles. He was of good family, and his parents were moderately well off. I was called to his bedside, the former doctor having been dismissed. I had had some conversation with the parents of the young man before I was ushered into his presence. They informed me that my predecessor had pronounced his disease "a rapid decline" and as incurable. But the case had other peculiarities which puzzled him. The brain, he said, was much affected.

The patient ate little, unlike other consumptive subjects, whose appetites are usually enormous. He slept much, and talked much in his sleep, but in his waking moments he was irritable and restless,

and preferred being left alone all day. He could not even bear the sight of his own parents in his room. He had his regular hours of sleep, and always seemed to look forward to his hours of rest, especially to his nightly hours.

I questioned the parents as to how long he had been in this state. They told me more than a year. I inquired if any member of their family had ever died of consumption. They replied that not one, either on the father's side or the mother's, bore the slightest trace of that malady, and that for many generations back the members of both families had lived to a good old age. Neither of the parents could give the slightest account of how the disease originated.

Their son had been sent to the university two or three years before, where he had studied hard, but without having made up his mind to follow any particular profession. They suggested that possibly over-study had sown the seeds of the disease. He was not, as they assured me, given to dissipation.

Having ascertained these particulars, I expressed a desire to see the patient, and was shown into the sickroom. The parents told me to prepare for a cool reception, as their son was not over partial to visitors, and especially doctors. They then retired,

leaving me alone with the patient, as I had previously requested them ; for it has always been my policy to work myself as much as possible into the confidence of my patients, in order to obtain more minute particulars of their case which otherwise they might be reserved upon. For this a *tête-à-tête* is absolutely necessary, as there are patients who are reserved even in the presence of their nearest relatives and friends.

The young man, as I entered, was seated in bed, propped up by cushions. He was in a thoughtful attitude, and for some moments seemed unconscious of my presence. At length, hearing my footsteps, he started, glared wildly at me, and turned his face to the wall.

"Come," I said soothingly, "don't be frightened; I am only the new doctor. I have come to see if I can't make something out of your case. Come, turn round. I daresay we shall be better friends before long. What is this?" I asked, as I laid my hand upon a volume hidden under the clothes, and examined it. "Ah, Shakespeare!"

"Don't touch it," cried the young man, starting up with sudden energy. "I never allow my Shakespeare to be polluted by strange hands."

I was rather startled at this sudden burst of irritability from my new patient, especially

in the exhausted state in which I found him, and not a little amused at the oddity of his caprice.

"You are a great admirer of Shakespeare?" I observed, after a pause.

He did not deign a reply, but fell back languidly on his cushions and closed his eyes.

"A great poet," I continued. "What insight into character! What knowledge of mankind! What a versatile genius! With what truth and exquisite feeling he portrays both the king and the peasant, the courtier and the jester! How truly he seizes the leading characteristics of the Jew and the Christian in his *Merchant of Venice*, to say nothing of his sublime imagination in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and in *The Tempest*; the exquisite humours, too, of his *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and then there is his"—

At this juncture my patient opened his eyes, and gave me a look that seemed to say, "Have you done yet?" and, after a pause, said aloud, "I thought you were the doctor."

"Ah! truly," said I, blushing slightly; "I am afraid I weary you. Pardon me if my enthusiasm for your great poet has carried me away from my professional duties. But, to business. How do you feel at present?"

He eyed me with a peculiar expression, and said, "Do you really want to know?"

"To be sure I do; haven't I come"—

"You have heard that I have been given over as incurable. The last doctor was an older man than you. What do you hope to effect?"

"To effect a cure; *I* do not give you up. I do *not* think your disease is consumption. I hope in time to"—

"To what?" he asked nervously.

"Well, to be able to serve you."

"No," he cried, "not to *serve* me, but to *cure* me."

"In curing you, shall I not serve you?"

"No. I do not want to be cured. Leave me to die, if you want to serve me.'

"Oh, my dear young man," I cried, "don't talk like that. Your malady is not of the sort that you need fear death so soon."

"Fear death!" he exclaimed. "On the contrary, I seek death. I desire to die."

"What! you desire to die? A young man like you, in the pride of your youth, with the whole world before you. What can make you so tired of your life?"

"Because my life's a burden to me."

"Poor young man," I said, "can you have

suffered so much! Ah," I muttered, half to myself, "youth has its sufferings as well as age."

I was young myself then, and I had suffered. I felt the deepest sympathy for my patient.

"If," I resumed, "in curing you I could make life cease to be a burden—

"I would not accept the offer," he replied. "What should I gain by it? The grosser material part of my nature would be rendered more gross, more material; capable only of those delights that the grossest minds revel in, to the utter exclusion of those sublime visions and aspirations which visit the soul when least clogged with matter. It would be to exchange a paradise for a pandemonium; high, exalted thoughts and feelings for low and grovelling ones. No," he said; "he who, like me, has tasted both lives will hardly throw away the higher for the lower."

I was puzzled by this last speech of his. Was the brain really affected? Had I to do with a case of insanity? I studied his physiognomy for some time in silence. He would have been called decidedly handsome; and yet that is not the word. I should rather say beautiful, but the complexion was pallid and the face dreadfully emaciated. The forehead was ample, but half-eclipsed by a mass of rich, chestnut hair that hung over his head in

disordered waves. The nose was Grecian; the mouth and chin classic; the eyes were large, dark, and lustrous, with an expression most unusual and indescribable.

If I may use the expression, he seemed to look through you and beyond you into space. The expression was quite unlike the vacant stare of the maniac, for the look abounded with superior intelligence, but yet it was not that sort of intelligence which men get by mixing in the world. His look had something *unearthly* in it—something of another world. I could not altogether bring myself to believe that he was mad. He would certainly have been called so by the world at large, which calls everything madness that does not come within its own narrow circle. His madness was that his faculties were too acute, his nervous system too sensitive. When he looked at me he seemed to read my inmost thoughts and answer them all with his eyes before I had time to open my mouth to give utterance to them.

I tried to reason with him, tried to show him that very good health was compatible with the most exalted thoughts, etc. But he always had an answer ready, and that, too, before the words were half out of my mouth. He was a perfect study, and I took immense interest in him. He, in turn,

grew more docile and confiding, and after some five or six visits we were the best of friends.

I have said that he slept much and was given much to talking in his sleep. It was on my third visit that I had some experience of this. We were in the midst of an animated discussion, when he suddenly went off into a most profound slumber; more suddenly than I had ever before known anyone to fall asleep, and so resembling death that for some time I thought him dead. At length his lips began to move, and for more than an hour he kept up a conversation with someone in his dream, part of which conversation I committed to paper.

"What!" he exclaimed, "this is the spot appointed, and no one near. This is the trysting tree, yonder the blue mountains, here the rocks. It is past the hour. Oh, where is she? Will she not come? Must I return to that darkness mortals call life without seeing her, without hearing one word? Oh, Edith! shake off these bonds of flesh but for one hour, if, indeed, you also have a life of clay like me, and are not all spirit. Can you not spare me *one* hour? Ah! footsteps! A bush crackles. Edith, Edith! how glad I am you have come at last. I was afraid you had been prevented. Why are you so late? What do I see—tears? Tell me what has happened. Does your father know of our

meetings? But how should he? Are we not in the spirit? Come, tell me all."

Here a pause ensued, as if the lady he was addressing was speaking, during which time the expression of his face changed several times; first from one of deep tenderness, next, to that of profound melancholy. He sighed, then again a bright smile illumined his countenance. Occasionally a slight frown would cloud his brow for an instant, and his countenance bore a look of determination. At length he spoke again in earnest tones.

"Come what may, I will never leave you. Have I not sworn? Are you not mine to all eternity? We may never meet in the flesh; but what of that. Are we not happier thus? Unshackled from that fearful darkness that wars against our spirits? Oh that we may ever live thus! Would that we could become all spirit."

Another pause ensued, and after some minutes he resumed.

"And how can your father's paltry caprices affect us—whilst we are in the spirit, how can the weapons of the flesh attack us?"

A pause, and then he said, "True, as you say, we are not always in the spirit, and then of course we must be subject to— But what is it you fear, Edith?"

Again a pause.

"Do you know," he began again, "that that is the very thought that has been passing through my mind for some time past. Oh, horrible! If one of us or both should get entirely cured, so that the doors of the flesh should close upon us for ever, our spiritual life desert us, without even the prospect of meeting in the flesh!" Here he groaned deeply. "How long will this last, this dream of bliss? It began but a year ago. If we could only escape altogether from our earthly bodies! but I feel that is impossible as yet; while I speak I feel attracted again towards clay. I am unable to resist; I feel myself torn away. I am going—going. Farewell, Edith."

The next moment he awoke. I folded up the paper on which I had been writing and placed it in my pocket; then turned to my patient. I have not given here one half of the conversation. I was unable to follow him with my pen the greater part of the time, for at times he would speak very rapidly, at other times sink his voice so low that I could not catch all he uttered.

"I am here again, then," he muttered to himself, with a groan. "When will this end?"

"You have had pleasant dreams, I hope," said I with a smile.

He looked at me suspiciously, and said, "You have heard me? Then you know all!"

"What? I asked.

"Why, all about that"—

"I know nothing," I replied. "It is true you talked in your sleep; you have been dreaming."

"Call it a dream, if you like," he said. "I exist but in such dreams, and my waking life is to me but a nightmare."

"Pooh! pooh!" I said. "You must not take such a morbid view of things. Your brain at present is in a state of fever. We cannot expect always to be well. I'll give you a composing draught, and in time I hope"—

"'Throw physic to the dogs,'" he replied, quoting from his favourite author. "'Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?'"

"Perhaps" said I, "I might manage to do that as well, if you will bide by my instructions."

"Look here, doctor," he said, at length; "I shall be very happy to see you whenever you come, to talk with you as a friend, as long as I remain upon earth, but I refuse point blank to take any of your medicine, so I don't deceive you."

I tried to expostulate; but how can one reason with a man who wants to die, and try to persuade him to take physic, itself nauseous, but to bring

him back to the life which he despises? My task was a difficult one, but I bethought me of a plan. I pretended to humour him, and took my leave, saying I would call again shortly.

On leaving the sickroom I entered the parlour where the parents of the invalid awaited me to hear my opinion of the case. I told them that the patient's nerves were in a most sensitive state; I had heard him talk much in his sleep; that the brain wanted repose. I told them that he had refused to take any of my medicine because he was tired of his life and did not wish to prolong it.

I then wrote out a prescription, which I told them to get made up at the chemist's. It was a composing draught which I desired them to administer in a tumbler of water, likewise pouring in some sweet syrup to hide the nauseous taste. Whenever he complained of thirst this medicine was to be given him. In this manner he would be forced to take my medicines, and might recover in spite of himself.

Before leaving the house I inquired of Charles' mother if she were aware of any love affair of her son's that might have sown the first seeds of this illness. She replied in the negative, but that she was aware that he often mentioned a lady's name in his sleep—the name "Edith."

She assured me that there was not a single young lady of her acquaintance who bore that name; that she was at a loss to conceive how he could have made the acquaintance of any lady for the last two years without her knowing it, as he had led such a very retired life since he had left the university. Truly, he might have made her acquaintance whilst at Oxford, but, then, he had never shown any symptoms of his present malady for long after.

I left the house, giving them all the hope I could, and promised to call again on the morrow. The morrow arrived, and I called again. My draught had been administered, and I thought that my patient was a degree less nervous. Whether it was my fancy or what, I know not, but it seemed to me that the invalid suspected I had been tampering with him. He said nothing, but I thought I read it in his eyes.

"How did you sleep last night?" I asked.

"Well," he replied; "but somehow I fancy that my dreams last night were less vivid."

"Not a bad sign," I observed. "Dreaming is a bad thing—sign of a disordered stomach."

"Some dreams—not all," he replied.

"No, not all; but those very vivid dreams that you allude to all proceed from a bad digestion or overheated brain."

"Then you set down all dreams to some physical cause?"

"Certainly," said I; "though the character of the dream will be shaped according to our waking thoughts."

"Well, yes," he replied; "generally it is so. I myself once used to have those sort of dreams. But have you never met with a patient who lived two separate existences, whose spirit during sleep wandered into those realms allotted to it; returning upon waking to the body, there to drag out a wretched existence in the world among the hum of men, and pass his melancholy hours longing for the night, when his spirit would be again set free from its prison, to wander unrestrained through those realms of space untrodden by mortal foot?"

"Never," I replied; and if I were to meet with a man who imagined he passed two different existences, what proof have I that his dreams are nothing more than imagination? What proof have I that he *really does* live two separate lives?"

"Proof such as you would desire to have I admit is difficult; but let us suppose a case. What would you say if, in the course of a lifetime's experience, you were to find some few, very rare, cases of men as I describe, who believe, as you would say, that their spirit during sleep leaves the

body and revels in a world of its own. That you were to read of some few other cases of the same sort that have occurred now and then at rare intervals since the world began, and that the written description of that abode unknown to mortal tread, were to tally in every particular with the descriptions you yourself received from some of your patients?"

"Well," I replied, "I should say, either that my patients had been reading these old legends until their brains were turned, or that it was a malady, and, like all other maladies, was manifested by certain special symptoms. Hence the similarity of the descriptions."

"I knew that would be your reply," he observed. "Doctor, doctor," he continued, shaking his head, "you have a great deal to learn."

"Have you, then," I inquired, "ever met with a man of that sort?"

"I know *one*. What should you say, doctor, if I myself was one of those men?"

"You! I should say that your imagination deluded you, that your present ill state of health is sufficient to account for any freak of the brain, however eccentric."

"Deluded mortal," he muttered. "Alas! by what circuitous paths do men persistently seek for

error, when the high road of Truth lies ever before their eyes."

We discoursed upon various other topics, and I took my leave of Charles, leaving instructions with his parents concerning the treatment of their son, as I should not be able to call again for some days. I had to attend a young lady in the country, the adopted daughter of a very old friend of mine. I could not refuse to go, so I started next day by the mail.

Charles' conversation had impressed me deeply, and I meditated upon it as I sat perched up outside the stage coach. I was sorry to leave him, for I had already felt quite an affection for him, independently of the interest I took in his case.

And who was this young lady that I was called upon to visit in such a hurry? I had never seen her, but for the sake of my friend who had benefited me in so many ways in the commencement of my career, I could not do otherwise than leave town for a short time.

I tried to picture to myself my new patient—some bread-and-butter girl with the mumps, hysteria, whooping-cough, or chicken-pox. The picture I mentally drew of my lady patient was not sentimental; but, the fact was, I was irritated at being

obliged to leave such an interesting case as that in which I was engaged. During the course of my drive I entered into conversation with the driver. I asked him if he knew Squire L——. He replied in the affirmative.

"Let me see," said I, pretending not to know the squire over well, in order to draw him out, "the squire has no family, I think?"

"None of his own, sir. He has one adopted daughter, a foundling, found somewhere near Stratford-on-Avon. The squire has adopted her ever since, and"—

"What age is the young lady?"

"Well, sir, she must now be hard upon four-and-twenty, though she did not look it last time I saw her."

"As old as that!" I exclaimed. "Then she will be getting married soon, I suppose?"

"Not she, sir."

"Why not?" I asked. "Isn't she personally attractive?"

"Oh, I believe you, sir," said the coachman enthusiastically, and turning up his eyes. "There is not a face in the whole place for miles round that can hold a candle to her."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed. "The squire is rich, too, as I hear, and I suppose she will be his heiress.

What is your reason for believing that she will not marry?"

"Why, sir, she has such ill health; she never leaves the house. Folks say as how she will never recover."

"Indeed, and how long has she been thus?"

"About a year ago she was first seized; since then I have not seen her. When I last saw her wasn't she a beauty, neither!"

"I suppose this illness will have pulled her down a little. By the bye, what is the nature of her complaint?"

"Well, I hardly know, sir, and that's the truth, what it is that do ail her. Some folks call it consumption, others call it something else."

"Who is her medical attendant?" I asked.

"Doctor W——, sir; lives down yonder."

"What does he say it is?"

"'Pon my word, sir, I don't think he knows more about it than other folks. Them doctors, when they once gets into a house, there's no getting them out again; and as for the good they do, they dose you, they bleed you—ay, bleed you in both senses of the word! Ha! ha! You know what I mean, sir."

I was disgusted at the vulgar contempt of this man for the noble profession of which I

myself was a member, and was determined not to laugh at his low wit. I passed over his execrable joke with gravity, so as not to appear to see it.

"If the doctor knows so little about it," I said, at length, "what do the people say it is? What is the popular opinion of the young lady's malady? What are the symptoms?"

I saw by the coachman's countenance that he was rather surprised at the interest I took in the health of the young lady, and I fancy he suspected that I was a doctor.

"Symptoms, sir!" he cried. "Oh, sir, very strange ones, they say."

"How strange?" I asked.

"Well, sir, there be a good many strange reports about the squire's adopted daughter. I b'ain't a-goin' to give credit to everything I hear, but folks *do* say"— here he lowered his voice almost to a whisper and looked mysteriously, first over one shoulder, then over the other.

"Well," said I, "folks say"—

"Yes, sir, folks *do* say that the young lady, leastways, the squire's adopted daughter, is—is"— (here he put his finger to his lips and looked still more mysterious).

"Well?" said I impatiently.

"That the poor young lady is under some evil spell—that she is *bewitched.*"

"Dear me! you don't say so," I exclaimed, with well-feigned astonishment.

"Yes, sir," he replied; "leastways, so folks say about here."

"How very dreadful! Poor young lady! Perhaps she is in love. Love is the only witchcraft that ever came in the way of my experience," I remarked.

"And sure, sir, you're not far out there neither; for if there's one thing more like witchcraft than another, it is that same *love.* Lor', bless yer, sir, don't I remember when I was courtin' my Poll, how I'd stand under her winder of a rainy night for hours, just to get a peep at her shadow on the winder blind, and how I'd go for days without my beer, till folks didn't know what to make of me? Ah! but I got over it, though, in time. I got cured, but" (here he gave me a knowing look) "it wasn't by a *doctor.* No, sir, it wasn't by a *doctor,*" he said, with a contemptuous emphasis on the last word.

"Now, who do you think it was by, sir, that I got cured?" he asked.

"I haven't the slightest idea," I replied drily, disgusted at the man's manner.

"Why, the *Parson*! to be sure," he exclaimed. "Ha, ha!" giving me a dig in the ribs with his undeveloped thumb. "Yes, sir, the parson beat the doctor out and out in that ere business. He, he!"

I dare say the joke was very witty, but I was in no humour for laughing just then; yet, after all, he did not know I was a doctor, so I condescended to give a grin, a spasmodic grin, like that a corpse may be supposed to give when the risible muscles are set in motion by the wires of a galvanic battery.

He then began to relate to me some of the many superstitions afloat concerning the above-mentioned lady, till I grew curious to make the acquaintance of my new patient. In the middle of one of his long stories, he pointed out to me the house of my friend Squire L——, so I descended and walked up the hill leading to his house.

Arrived there, I rang, and was shown into the parlour, and upon giving my name, was soon cordially received by my old friend. We had not met for years. He had much to tell me, and seemed very much concerned about the health of his adopted daughter, whom he loved as if she had been his own flesh and blood.

His wife soon entered, and having expressed much pleasure at seeing me after so long, began giving me the peculiar symptoms of the lady's case.

"I do not know what to make of her, my dear doctor," she said; "for a whole year past she has not been the same girl. She will not eat, nor see anyone; seems quite estranged towards us, gets nervous and irritable if anyone approaches her; sleeps much and talks much during her sleep, and frequently imagines in her dream that she is holding conversation with a young man whom she addresses as Charles."

I started. The lady and her husband both noticed my emotion, and inquired into its cause. I told them that the case of their adopted daughter so nearly resembled the case of a young man in London whom I was still in the habit of attending, that the similarity of the symptoms struck me with no little surprise.

"Indeed, doctor," said the lady. "Is it possible that there can be two such extraordinary cases in the world?"

I mused a little, and then observed, "You do not think, do you, that the first cause of this strange malady was some little affair of the heart?"

"Oh, dear, no, doctor," she replied. "I am certain of it. The girl has never had the opportunity of forming the acquaintance of any young men. She has never left this village in her life,

though she has often begged me to take her to London; but somehow I"—

"What! you say she has never been to London—not even for a day?"

"Never," she replied.

I began musing to myself, when I was interrupted from my train of thought by the voice of the patient calling out, in agonising tones, "Charles! Charles!"

"Edith, my love! what *is* the matter?" cried Mrs. L——, rising and leaving the room.

"Edith!" I muttered to myself. "How strange! What a strange link between the two cases." I did not know what to make of it all. However, I kept the particulars of Charles' case to myself for the present, and determined to investigate the matter closely.

"Can I see the patient?" I asked of my old friend.

"Certainly; we will go together," he said.

"Thank you, but I should prefer a private interview with her, if possible. Patients sometimes will not be communicative to the doctor in presence of others, even though they be their own relations. It is always my plan to"—

"Ah, exactly, doctor," he replied; "but I am afraid she will not give you a very warm reception."

"Oh," I replied, "as to that, I am accustomed

to the very worst of receptions from some of my patients."

My friend led me to the chamber of the young lady, whom I discovered in bed, propped up by cushions, talking to Mrs. L——.

"This is Dr. Bleedem, my love," said the squire. "Now, don't be shy, but tell him all that you feel the matter with you. I shall leave him alone with you. Don't be nervous; he is a very old friend of mine."

Then, beckoning to his wife, he drew her away, and left me alone with my patient.

The first thing that struck me upon entering the chamber was the remarkable likeness my new patient bore to Charles. They might well have been brother and sister, though the hair of Edith was dark and her eyes a deep grey. The features were wonderfully alike, and the eyes had that same strange unearthly expression I have already described as belonging to Charles. Contrary to my expectations, she received me most civilly; very differently to the manner in which I was treated by Charles on our first interview. I was at a loss to account for this, as my friend had warned me not to hope for a very warm reception.

"Oh, doctor!" she exclaimed, "I am so glad you have come. Your presence brings me relief.

You are the only person whose sight I have been able to tolerate for this last year and more."

I was thunderstruck. What could she mean? Some caprice, I suppose. Perhaps my old friend has been putting in a good word for me.

"No, doctor," she said, answering to my thoughts in a manner that perfectly amazed me; "no; it is not as you think. The squire never told me until this moment that you were an old friend of his. It is not for that that I feel myself drawn towards you by some almost unaccountable sympathy; but, to tell you the truth, doctor, I have long felt the want of someone to confide in, and you are just the one. You must forgive my boldness, if it offends you, whom I should like to make my father confessor."

I smiled at the innocent want of restraint with which she uttered these words, and said, "I should be most happy to fulfil the office."

"Should you, doctor?" she replied. "Well, I shall be most unreserved towards you, and I hope you will return the compliment, and tell me all it is in your power to communicate."

I looked surprised, and asked, "Of what—of whom would you hear?"

"Doctor," she said, fixing upon me those deep grey orbs, with a glance that seemed to read my

inmost soul, "do not deceive me; you *know* that you have been with *him*."

"Who can she mean?" I mentally asked. "Can she mean Charles?"

"Yes," she answered to my thought, "with *him*—with *Charles*. Hide nothing from me, doctor. I see you look surprised that I should know where you come from; but my senses are too keen, too abnormally acute, not to perceive that you carry about you *the particles of his being* as unmistakably as if you had been amongst roses or honeysuckles. Can I be deceived when you come to me directly from the chamber of the only man I ever loved in my life, with the atoms of his nature clinging to you? Think you that I know aught of your doings? That I have been informed as to where *he* lives? I tell you, No; I know nothing but what my senses tell me. I feel you have been with him, and whatever you might tell me to the contrary would not make me believe otherwise."

"Well," I said, smiling, "I don't deny that I *have* just come from a patient in London, whose name is Charles; but London is large, and there are many Charleses."

"I do not care *where* your patient is—whether at London or the North Pole, I shall probably never come across him; in fact, I don't see that it

would aid matters much if I were to. I have never seen him—that is to say, with these eyes—and probably never may," she said, with a deep sigh.

"Do I understand you to say that you have never seen this young man you talk about, and yet you take so much interest in him?"

"Never with the eyes of the body," she replied.

"How, then?" I asked.

"With the eyes of the spirit."

"That is to say," I resumed, "that this young man named Charles is but a creature of the imagination—that he has no real existence."

"Oh, pardon me," she replied; "decidedly he has an existence—a double one. A bodily one, of which I know nothing; and a spiritual one, of which I know more."

"How?" I asked. "You have never seen him in the flesh, but are yet acquainted with his spirit. Does the spirit leave his body and appear to you?"

"Precisely so."

"Oh! but these are hallucinations, my dear young lady," I said, "that patients in your state of health are frequently subject to."

"No, doctor; say not so," she answered. "It is now more than a year since, that in my dream, as I was walking alone in a beautiful garden, I met a young man, also quite alone and reading. He

was of extraordinary personal beauty. He looked at me a moment and passed by. The very next evening I had the same dream—there he was again. The dream was so very vivid, that I could not believe it to be one of those ordinary dreams so common to persons suffering from indigestion. There was such a reality about the whole—the garden, the terraces, the old house—altogether had too much truth about it to have been a dream."

"And what do you think it was, if not a dream?" I asked, smiling.

"Nothing less," she replied, "than a glimpse into that world so zealously guarded from our mortal eyes as to make us doubt of its existence, or, at least, to hold it as something so ethereal and visionary that we tremble even to speculate on it; but which, nevertheless, exists, has existed, and will exist to all eternity in form as palpable as the earth we this day inhabit."

I mused a little, then said, "Dreams are often very vivid; I know that by experience, but upon waking I have always been able to account for them in some way or other."

"Don't call this a dream of mine, doctor," she said. "In everything it is most unlike the dreams of your experience. Those you allude to are vivid only for one night, and disperse into air on waking.

Such is not the case with my dreams. The dream of each night to me is the continuation of the dream of the preceding night, and this has been regularly going on for more than a year, each dream being crowded with a series of events such as would be sufficient to fill up a lifetime; and so vivid, indeed, is the colouring of everything in these visions, that I no more doubt in a double existence than that I am talking to you at the present moment. In awaking, too, I find, that instead of vanishing like an ordinary dream, I bear ever afterwards the strongest recollection of everything that has happened during my period of sleep."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed. "It is very strange. I am just attending a young man in London who shares your complaint. The case is a rare one; I never came across one before at all like it. The coincidence about the whole affair is so strange, too. His name happens to be Charles, and whilst talking in his sleep as they tell me you do, I have heard him mention the name Edith. Your name, is it not?"

"'Tis he! 'Tis he!" exclaimed my patient, enthusiastically, throwing up her arms and clasping her hands above her head. "I knew it! I knew it! But tell me more about him, doctor! I did not see him last night, and I was so unhappy. The

night before he appeared to me less distinct than he had ever done before. Oh, doctor," she cried, in an agonising tone, "you are *curing* him! you are *curing* him!" much in the same way as she might have called out, "You are *killing* him!"

"Yes, I hope to some day. There is no great harm in that, I suppose?" I remarked.

"Oh yes, indeed!" she cried; "you are imprisoning his spirit within his body, and I shall never see him again."

"Well," I thought to myself, "this is about the oddest courtship *I* ever heard of; but," I continued, aloud, "supposing I could cure you both; then, afterwards, you might meet in the flesh; and how much better that would be. You would preserve your health and"—

"No, no," she cried. "Do you think our joys could be half so intense, so ethereal, in a fleshly life as when walking in the spirit? No, doctor, have mercy upon both of us, and leave us to die; we shall then be all spirit."

"Charles' sentiments exactly," I muttered.

"Are they not?" she said, brightening up.

"He, then, has let you into the secret of this phenomenon of his being! Oh, doctor," she exclaimed, "don't, don't, *cure him*!"

She spoke with such agony of feeling, that I

could not help feeling the deepest sympathy for her, and I actually for a moment began to waver in my duties as a medical man. I began to think that if, as it now appears, two human beings, having never met in the body, are nevertheless by some occult law of nature permitted to hold communion with each other in the spirit as lovers, what cruelty in me to try and cut short their happy time of courtship! Would it not be kinder in me (seeing that the order of their beings differs so from that of the rest of the herd) to go against the common duties of my profession, and, instead of trying to remedy the malady, to accelerate it, till it resulted in death.

"But no," I said to myself immediately; "my reputation, my conscience. What! *I* a poisoner! No," I said; "we must all die some day, and my two lover patients must hold out in this life a little longer. Death comes soon enough for all, and then, if their spirit love was as lasting as it appeared to be intense, they might resume their amours after this mortal coil was doffed. What are a few paltry years compared with the immeasurable gulf of eternity?" Thus I mused, but suddenly I said, "You will not mind taking a little light physic, will you?"

"What! to make me well!" she exclaimed.

"To imprison my spirit within my body, as you have done Charles'. But stay, if I take your physic, it will not be yet. I will wait to see if Charles is really lost to me for ever. If he does not appear again all this week, then his spirit has no longer power to wander from the body, and if he is lost to me, why should I wander about in the spirit seeking him in vain? I might just as well be cured as not."

"Very well," I said; "then, for the present it is needless to adminster any medicine?"

"Not at present, doctor," she said.

I took up my hat to go, and said that I would call again soon and would bring her tidings of Charles; that I was going there straight from her.

"Stay, stay," she said. "You have told me nothing about him as yet."

"Well, my dear young lady," I said, "I really do not know what to tell you about him. Like yourself, he refused to take my medicine, and"—

"What, he refused! Then how is it that he is getting well? That he does not appear to me now? Doctor, you have had something administered on the sly. I know it. I see it in your face;" and the look that she gave me was so penetrating that I quite quailed under it, and was obliged to admit that I had.

"And you are going to try the same trick with me. Oh! oh!"

Here she groaned, and threw herself forward on the bed in agony.

"My dear Miss Edith," I said compassionately, "calm yourself; pray reflect. I can't, I daren't leave you to die. Be persuaded, and take only a little harmless, quieting medicine, not nauseous to the taste, and which may not have the effect of making you cease to dream."

But my fair patient was not to be persuaded, so, with hat in hand, I made another step towards the door.

"Stay, doctor," she said; "whatever you do, keep our conversation secret from the people of the house."

"Certainly," said I. "Has it not been under the 'seal of confession!'"

"True, true," she said; "and, doctor—would you mind — if you are really going to call upon — Charles, to — to — take a relic to him of me?"

"Not at all," I said. "On the contrary, I should be most happy; but"— I said, after a moment's reflection, "but — your parents—would they object, do you think?"

"Oh, don't be afraid, doctor," she replied. "I

am very independent, and as for yourself, your name needn't get mixed up in the transaction.

Here she reached a pair of scissors, and severed one of her long ebony tresses, which she handed to me with these words—

"Take this," she said, "to my spirit lover, and tell him Edith sends him this in the flesh, and hopes to see him again in the spirit."

I promised I would do as she desired, and shaking hands with her, I left the apartment.

My friend and his wife awaited me in the parlour, and asked me my opinion of their daughter's case. I gave them hope of her recovery; but told them that she had positively refused to take any of my medicines, and I therefore adopted the same manœuvre that I had adopted with Charles, and was forced to leave the medicine to be administered clandestinely. I wrote out a prescription and left the house, saying I would call again in a day or two. I took the mail that evening, and started for London. Finding myself at length arrived in the great metropolis, my first thought was to call upon Charles.

As I entered his chamber the expression on my patient's countenance was one of deepest melancholy. When he first caught sight of me I thought he looked suspicious, and was going to turn away,

but as I approached him his countenance altogether changed, and grew so bright and radiant, that he did not look the same man. He had never welcomed me before in this way, and his manner puzzled me.

"Oh, doctor," he cried, in tones of the greatest joy, "is it possible you have seen her? I know you have; I can't be mistaken."

"Seen who?" I asked, smiling.

"Come, doctor," he said, "you know all about it; don't pretend to ignore"—

"Ignore what?" I inquired, with provoking pertinacity.

"Oh, doctor, doctor! you'll drive me mad," exclaimed my patient. "Tell me all about her at once, and keep me no longer in suspense. Oh, Edith! Edith! I feel your presence. Come, doctor, tell me about *Edith.*"

"What Edith?" I exclaimed. "Are there not many of that name? It is true I *do* come from a young lady patient whose name *happens* to be Edith. What then?"

"The same! I knew it! I knew it!" he cried. "Tell me all about her, doctor; you have seen her, and spoken to her. Oh! we may yet meet in the flesh, even if she be denied me in the spirit. Did you tell her of my case, doctor?"

I nodded my head.

"I told her," said I, "that I was attending a young man whose symptoms very much resembled her own. Oh! I had a long talk with her, I assure you; and what do you think she wants of me?" I asked. "Why, she was actually unfeeling enough to ask me not to cure you; she was, indeed."

"My own dear Edith!" he exclaimed. "Of course she doesn't want me cured; and, doctor, if you would do both her and me a kindness, don't—oh, don't—cure her."

"Well, you're an amiable couple, I'm fancying," said I. "I wonder whether there are many more such loving couples in the world as you two."

"Well, doctor," he said, smiling, "have you any more news for me?"

"Perhaps I may have," I answered, mysteriously. "What should you say if she entrusted me with a present to you?"

"A present from *her*! Oh, doctor, don't trifle with me. Is it really so?"

Hereupon I thrust my hand into my pocket, and produced the lock of hair, wrapped up in a piece of tissue paper. He made a snatch at it with his long lean fingers, and tearing it open, exclaimed, "*Her* hair! I could swear to it anywhere. What

did she say, doctor, when she gave this into your hands?"

"She said," said I, "'Take this to my spirit lover, and tell him Edith sends him this in the flesh, and hopes to see him again in the spirit.'"

"Bless her! bless her!" he cried, enthusiastically kissing the relic repeatedly and pressing it to his heart.

I allowed this transport to pass well over before I spoke again. At length I inquired how he had passed the night.

"Badly," he replied sulkily.

"What! have you not felt quieter, more composed?"

"Oh yes," he answered; "you don't suppose that I am ignorant that you have been drugging me?" he said, casting at me a look of reproach.

"Drugging you?" I exclaimed.

"Yes; did you think I couldn't taste that stuff that you got my parents to give me through all its disguise? Do you think I did not feel its influence?"

"A salutary influence only, I hope," I answered, being forced at length to admit the stratagem that I had felt it my duty to adopt.

"What you would call a salutary influence," he retorted. "But do you know," he added, almost

fiercely, "that you have robbed me of those dreams that constituted the better part of my life? In fact, my *real*, my *only* life."

"I am sorry for that," I remarked. "Do you then not dream at all now?"

"If I dream, I do *but* dream—like all ordinary mortals, but my second existence is closed, I fear, for ever. I will tell you what I dreamt last night. I walked towards the entrance of a beautiful garden where I had often been in the habit of meeting Edith, and I found the gate closed. I shook it, and tried to open it by main force, when I noticed something written over the gate. I read these words, 'This is the abode of spirits untrammelled by the flesh.'

"I did not know other than that I was as much in the spirit as on any of the preceding nights, so I tried the gate again, only to meet with the same success; but this time I heard a voice calling out, 'Thy flesh hath grown upon thy spirit—the doors of thy soul are closed—hence! back to earth!' I made one more desperate effort, and called out, 'Edith! Edith!' but my voice went forth from me weak, like a voice in the distance. Nevertheless, my cry was answered. I heard Edith's voice within the garden calling out my name, but in very feeble tones. My ears were too grossly clogged with

flesh to hear distinctly spiritual sounds. I was aware of Edith's presence. She shook the garden gate with her hands and spoke to me through the bars, but I saw no form. I heard only her voice.

"'Come to me,' she said, in what appeared a suppressed whisper. 'Oh, what is this Charles? Why cannot you come?'

"Then the same unknown voice that had addressed me before spoke again, 'Spirit to spirit—flesh to flesh!' and I felt myself whirled back from the garden gate as by a whirlwind, and I awoke."

"The dream is strange," I observed. "Have you many such dreams?" I asked.

"Up to the present time, thank goodness, no; but who knows if to-night I shall be able to dream at all?"

"You will sleep all the sounder if you don't. Dreams always come when the sleep is disturbed," said I.

"Doctor, would you rob me of all I have to live for by your drugs?" he exclaimed.

"I should be sorry," I replied, "if my drugs have the unfortunate effect of robbing you of pleasant dreams; but it is my first duty as a medical man to remedy the physical ills of my patients."

"Well, no more drugs for me, that's all," he

said positively. "The next article of food I take that tastes in the slightest degree of physic I shall certainly throw away."

"In that case," I replied, "if there is no way of administering medicine to you, this must be my last visit. It is useless calling on a patient who refuses to be cured."

"Well, doctor," he said, "I shall be sorry to lose you, as your conversation serves to cheer my waking death. Of course, I can't expect you to put yourself out of the way to come here for nothing; but if at any time you are not better employed, just drop in as a friend."

"Well," I said, "I should not like to drop an acquaintance so interesting. But, the subject of medicine apart, you really must take a little more nutriment than you do."

This was what was really the matter with him. The body was worn away through insufficient diet, till the patient was in a state bordering on starvation; and this had been for a long time persisted in, as the invalid found a morbid delight in those vivid dreams peculiar to all people who practise long fasting; and so loth was he to give up his beloved dreamland, that he was ready to sacrifice life itself.

We chatted together for some time longer, and he related to me many of his dreams, which were all

of a most extraordinary character. At length I got up to go, saying I would call on the morrow, and entered the parlour where the parents of the young man were seated. They asked me how my patient progressed. I told them he wanted plenty of nutriment, and, without ordering further medicine, I told them to give him plenty of mutton broth, beef tea, and other nutritious things, and to put them as close to his bed as possible, that the smell of the savoury food might awaken his appetite.

They promised to comply with my request, and I quitted the house. I had one or two other cases to attend to after that, which interested me in a much less degree, after which I returned home, and committed to paper the leading peculiarities of the cases of Charles and Edith.

In the course of the morrow I called again upon Charles. I thought he looked better. There was certainly a change in him since my first visit.

"Well," I asked, "and how did you sleep last night?"

"Oh, doctor!" he answered, "such a dream!"

"Well, come, what was it?"

"I thought," he began, "that I was again in search of that garden gate that I have before alluded to, but when I came in sight of it it was no longer distinct and tangible as on the preceding

night, but misty in outline, and as I approached it seemed to recede and grew more misty, as if I saw it through a fog. The fog grew more and more dense, like an immense black cloud, and I saw nothing. Then the cloud seemed to solidify, and it turned to a solid wall of stone, and I found myself suddenly enclosed within what looked like the court-yard of a prison. I looked out for some loophole, but all attempt at escape appeared impossible. My eye soon caught an inscription on the wall, which ran thus, 'The boundary of the body.'

"'What,' I said, within myself, 'can my spirit no longer soar into those blissful realms it was wont formerly to revel in? Must I tamely submit to this imprisonment without one effort? No,' I said; 'never will I basely give in thus.' And, noticing a wide chink between the stones, I placed the tip of my foot in. I soon found another notch for my fingers. There was no one near, so, finding higher up another chink, I put the other foot in that, and after considerable difficulty and danger, succeeded in reaching the top of the wall. I found that the prison was built on a high rock in the middle of the sea, and guarded by demon sentinels.

"I looked out into the distance. There was nothing but sea and sky, and that, too, seemed so blended together as to appear all one element. In

whatever direction I chanced to gaze, all was vast, infinite, indefinable.

"'Yonder must be the realms of the spirit,' I muttered to myself, as I lolled upon the summit of the prison wall. The words I uttered fell upon the ear of a demon sentinel below, armed with a long halberd. He raised the alarm, and I was forced to descend from my perch. Finding myself once more in the prison yard, I heard rapid footsteps behind me, and the jingling of keys. I turned round suddenly and beheld the jailer.

"'What is this place?' I asked, somewhat sternly, 'and why am I here?'

"'This building,' answered the jailer, 'is called *the prison-house of flesh*, and the reason you are here is that you belong to "our sort."'

"I groaned, and followed the jailer, who led me below into some horrid cell, where the daylight scarce entered. He turned the key upon me and I awoke."

"Dear me," said I, "that was a very disagreeable dream. There was nothing about Miss Edith in that," I said, smiling wickedly.

"No," he said savagely, "and whose face do you think the jailer's was in my dream?"

"I have no idea," I replied.

"Why, *yours*, doctor!" said the young man,

suddenly starting up with extreme energy, and darting a look of ferocity towards me.

"Yes, doctor, you are my jailer; it is you who have closed my spirit up in its prison-house of flesh, so that it can no longer soar together in the company of the higher intelligences. It is you who have driven me back again to earth and made me an equal of such minds as your own. *You* have robbed me of the only woman I ever loved in my life, *you*"—

"Stay, young man, one moment," I said, "and calm yourself. Is this your gratitude for the relic I brought you yesterday? If I, as you say, have robbed you of one of your lives, don't I offer you another which, to a young man of your age and position, is a state of existence that I can't say how many would *envy*, and which, after all, is doing nothing more than my duty as a medical man. Then, as to robbing you of the lady you love, haven't I the power of making you acquainted with her some day in the flesh, if all goes well, and I succeeded in curing you both?"

"If such a meeting should take place, do you think," he said, "that we should experience, in the same intense degree, those chaste joys of love as if we were in the spirit, when our souls, unfettered from any particle of clay, are raised to that sublime

pitch that we are enabled to understand the profound and lofty discourse of angels and become ourselves for the time a part of the heavenly bodies?"

"My dear young man," I observed, "life is short. If the paradise you are in the habit of entering in your dreams be indeed that place where all good souls hope to go after death, you have but to wait for a few years"—

"Wait a few years!" he exclaimed impatiently, "when every minute spent away from *her* appears a century! It's very plain *you* are not in love."

"In the meantime," I said, "content yourself with a life of flesh like any other rational mortal."

He began to reflect upon my words, so I thought I would improve the opportunity, and, if possible, try and make him turn human, so I observed.

"I shall not be here to-morrow; I am going to visit Miss Edith. Shall I take her any message?"

"Oh yes, doctor, certainly, by all means; that is, I'll write. Give me some paper, pen, and ink."

Having handed him these materials, he sat up in bed and penned an epistle to his lady-love in the flesh, which he sealed and handed to me.

I assured him of its safety in my hands, and took my leave of him for some days, hoping to find him more reconciled to humanity on my return.

Having given the parents of Charles further

instructions with regard to their son, I took my departure, and shortly afterwards taking the stage, was *en route* for my friend's country seat, where I arrived early the next morning.

"And how is our patient?" I asked, as I shook hands with my friend at the threshold.

"I fancy she sleeps sounder, doctor," he replied. "We are not so often disturbed by her talking in her sleep."

"Good," said I; "her nerves will be getting a little stronger. Can I see her?"

"Oh yes; walk straight to her room."

As I entered, my patient was sitting up in bed, reading.

"Ah!" said I, after the customary salutations, "we are better this morning, eh?"

"Oh, doctor, is that you? I am glad you have come."

"What book is that?" I asked, at the same time looking at the title. "Ah! Shakespeare. That is Charles' favourite author."

"I know it, doctor. Oh, how often have we read it together; but now, alas!"

"Why alas?" asked I.

"Ah, doctor," she replied, shaking her head slowly, "I never see him now. You are curing him, and me, too. Of what value to me is a body

in perfect health, when it imprisons within it a wounded soul?"

"Come, let me see if I can't bring some balm to the wounded soul," I said, producing from my pocket Charles' letter.

"From him?" she exclaimed. "Oh, doctor, I shall be for ever grateful to you. I dreamt I received a letter from him last night. How is he —better? Stay, let me read."

She tore open the letter and read in an undertone, just loud enough for me to hear—

"Angel of my dreams—Charles in the flesh pens thee these poor lines, greeting. How art thou, now shut from me! The doors of the body have closed upon my spirit, and I feel that I no more belong to the same order of beings as a few nights ago. For me now thou mayest wait in vain in the garden, by the trysting tree, in the wild forest, by the seashore, in the desert, by the foaming cataract, on the bleak mountain top, or by moonlight on the crags of the wild glacier, wherever the wings of thy spirit may carry thee. I cannot follow thee. I linger in chains of clay, and languish from day to day in my prison-house of flesh, whilst thou— But, stay, perhaps the lot I bear may be thy own; perhaps the doors of the flesh may have closed upon *thy* spirit also. Oh, if it be that our souls are

for ever banished from that Paradise which they have so often revelled in together! What have we further to look forward to but those earthly joys known to the most grovelling mortal? This is a melancholy prospect, my Edith, for us who remember (however, indistinctly—from the growth of that clay—over *thy* spirit perchance, as well as my own) those divine joys we experienced together, when our spirits walked untrammelled from our bonds of clay, and our souls melted into the harmony of those spheres which are their proper element. How the weight of this mortal coil oppresses me as I write! I can think of nothing that is untainted with the gross material nature that surrounds me. My dreams of late confirm my horrible suspicions. When, the other night, I sought thee at the garden gate, where enter only spirits untrammelled by the flesh, didst thou hear that voice that turned me away, and bid me return to earth? Oh! Edith, let us both make another effort before it is too late. Perhaps even now"—

Here the patient dropped her voice, and her eye scanned the paper in silence, from which I inferred that there was something about myself in it that she did not wish me to know; but I had heard enough. Charles wanted to persuade his lady-love to battle against all my efforts to bring

her round to a proper state of health, and intended doing the same himself. Here was a regular conspiracy—two patients already all but on the point of death, had leagued together to starve themselves outright, and so baffle all the doctor's efforts to save them. Oh, it was downright suicide. I did not know exactly what to do.

"This is the last time I'll act as Mercury between two lovers," thought I.

I had a momentary thought of watching for an opportunity to get the letter into my hands, unobserved by my patient, after she had finished reading it, and then of crumpling it up abstractedly, and throwing it into the fire, as it was winter and a large fire was made up in the patient's room, thinking that the impression might wear off her mind after having read the letter only once; but how might not her lover's words influence her if she were allowed to read and re-read his letter when left alone? No opportunity, however, presented itself, for after she had finished reading it she kissed it fervently and placed it in her bosom and held it there, glancing at me rather suspiciously, as I thought, as if she read my intentions in my face; but this might have been fancy.

However, I tried what I could do in the way of argument, to show the advantage of keeping a

sound mind in a sound body, besides pointing out the probability of her some day—perhaps before long—meeting her lover in the flesh, and that there was no reason why they need not eventually be happy. I talked to her much of Charles, and hoped to see her again soon, though I should not call so very often now, as my visits would not be necessary. I left her, giving instructions to her parents, to administer to her all sorts of nutritious food as I had done to the parents of Charles concerning their son.

I let some little time pass over before I called upon either of my lover-patients again. I at length called upon Charles, and found him all but recovered. Though still weak, his face had filled out considerably, and his nerves were no longer so morbidly acute, and his countenance had lost to a great extent that supernatural look that characterised it on my first visit; still, it was far from being the face of a man in robust health. I thought him silent and reserved towards me, but when I told him I had delivered his letter, and talked to him of his lady-love, he brightened up a little. I told him I should take the stage on the morrow to visit Edith.

He wanted me to take another letter, but I pleaded great hurry, and escaped from the house.

When I saw Edith again, she also had improved in health immensely, thanks to the careful watching of my friend's wife, who was like a real mother to her, and would *not* allow her to starve herself. Seeing her so nearly recovered, I recommended a little change of air as soon as convenient.

Upon my departure Edith managed to slip a *billet-doux* into my hand, directed to Charles; that is to say, without address, for I had not told her where he lived. We were not left alone on this interview, the wife of my friend being present all the while, so the note had to be passed into my hand clandestinely. There was no getting out of it, and I had to deliver it to Charles as soon as I arrived in town. His eyes sparkled when he saw her writing.

"Look here, what Edith says about you!" said he, somewhat bitterly. He read as follows:—

"DEAREST CHARLES,—Your own true Edith writes to you in the flesh by our common but well-meaning enemy, Dr. Bleedem."

"There!" he said, "that's what she thinks of you."

"Enemy!" I cried in astonishment.

"Yes, enemy; but well-meaning, you see, she says," he continued, in a softened tone.

He then continued to read—

"The poor man thinks, no doubt, that he has achieved a great thing in bringing us privileged seers into the world of spirits back into this mundane sphere, fit only for beings of his order. Of course, what else could be expected of him? The nature of his profession, the grossness of his being, compel him to think and act in the way of grovelling mortals; but let us not be too hard upon him; he is a good man, and means well."

"There!" he observed; "you see, she is charitably disposed towards you. I don't know that I feel disposed to be so lenient."

At this odd beginning of a love-letter, and still odder allusion to myself, I fairly burst out laughing.

"Oh! laugh away," he said; "it is a fine triumph to rob two beings of the very essence of their happiness."

I had not done laughing, and he was nearly catching the infection. He observed in the words of his favourite poet, that, "'my lungs did crow like chanticleer, and I did laugh sans intermission.'"

He took up the letter, again, and read a great portion to himself, or half aloud. I caught the following passage:—

"Do you remember, Charles, when, in the early days of our courtship, you used nightly to

serenade me under my window in the enchanted castle, and how long it was before you knew that I, like yourself, had an earthly body that had an existence of its own? And when I told you that my parents—or rather, my adopted parents—were not in the land of spirits, but that they inhabited the same world in which, in the daytime, we ourselves were forced to vegetate; and when you thereupon asked me with whom I shared the castle, do you remember the horror, the rage, and indignation you felt when you heard that I was held captive within that enchanted castle by a horrible wizard, who tortured me and tried all his base arts to make me yield to his love? Oh! Charles, I often look back to that time. I can see the bold outline of that rude, massive building on a rock frowning on the lake below. I feel myself yet at my casement, gazing out in search of your bark, which passed nightly close to my window, and I fancy I hear your touch upon the lute reverberating through the night air.

"With what horror I remember being torn from my window on that night by my captor, as I was waving my handkerchief to you on the lake. Oh! the torture I underwent within those unhallowed walls after you left me; the scenes I was compelled to witness, the oaths I was forced to hear; and then the infernal hideousness of the countenance of my demon captor!

"Oh! Charles, shall I ever forget the night on which you rode up to the wizard's castle on a spirit charger, habited as a cavalier, and bearing a ladder of ropes under your mantle which you

reached up to me on the point of your lance; how I descended, and you placed me behind you on your steed and galloped away; how, ere we were far from the castle, my flight was discovered, and the wizard and all his demon host mounted their demon chargers and started in pursuit of us; how they gained on us; how we avoided them for miles by hardly half-a-horse's length, until we arrived at a bridge across a river of fire, over which none but the pure in love can pass? Dost remember, Charles, how bravely thy spirit charger bore us over in safety, and how, when the fell magician endeavoured to follow us with his evil crew, how the bridge tumbled to atoms, and the demon host was swallowed up in the fiery waves? Then how, when our charger was spent, we turned him out to graze, the sun having risen; and how, having arrived at the sea-shore, we found a boat, which we entered, and steered onward in search of further adventure. How swiftly, how gallantly we sailed, as if borne on by the good spirits, until we reached an island, where the inhabitants welcomed us and claimed us as their king and queen. Charles! do you remember all this? But why call up all these reminiscences? They are over now, and passed as a dream, and this henceforward must be our life. I know nothing of your life in the flesh, my spirit lover, or what may be your social position in this world. No matter, whatever it be, and in spite of whatever obstacles may raise themselves to our happiness in this vale of tears, remember that I am ever thine in the spirit,

"Edith L——."

Having concluded, he folded up the letter, kissed it, and pressed it to his heart.

"And do you remember all the details of that strange adventure alluded to by Miss Edith, as having happened to you both? Do you remember really having taken part in this strange romance in another phase of existence?" I asked.

"Certainly I do," he replied; "every particular of it."

"Strange!" I muttered to myself. "Then these *dreams*, as we ordinary mortals would say, are really to such beings as yourself *facts*—phases of another existence," I remarked.

"Precisely so," said he.

"Then your being king of an island was no mere phantasy," said I; "but as much a fact"—

"As much a fact as that while in the flesh I am a poor devil," he replied.

"Well, I never thought I should have a royal patient," I observed smiling.

"Ah!" he said, "now do you see the extent of the wrong that you have done me? You have robbed me of a kingdom in bringing me back to health."

"Many a sick monarch would be glad to exchange his kingdom for good health," I retorted.

This was almost my last visit to Charles. I

did call again, but it was long after he had completely recovered.

Months passed away, when one day I casually met Charles in the streets. He had quite recovered, and was looking very well. He had much to tell me, so, as I had a little spare time on hand, we strolled into the park, and being a hot day, we sat down together beneath the shade of a tree in a solitary spot. He seemed to have grown more reconciled to humanity, having now only a dim recollection of the intensity of the joys he used to experience in his dreams. I touched upon the subject nearest his heart, and he commenced a recital of all that had happened to him since we last met. I shall endeavour to give his own words as nearly as possible.

"You will remember, doctor," he began, "that you left me without giving me the address of Miss L——" (Edith took the surname of my friend the squire, as if she were his own daughter, her real name being unknown). "I called upon you afterwards on purpose to inquire, and was informed that you were out of town. I had no one now to apply to for information, and was in despair. I did not know what to do with myself in town during the summer, so I thought I would try a little country air. I loitered about first

in one country place, then in another, without any fixed purpose. I had been reading Shakespeare one day, and upon closing the book, I resolved I would take a pilgrimage to the birthplace of the great Swan of Avon.

"I had never yet visited this retreat, so I started at once, and determined to put up in the village for some time. With what a thrill of delight, awe, and enthusiasm I crossed the threshold of that humble domicile! *His* foot had once crossed the same spot! Here was the window that *he* used to look out of. The identical glass, too, all carefully preserved by a network of wire. *His* table and *his* chair! There was something magical to me in that low-roofed chamber, with its old-fashioned beams.

"This, then, was the birthplace of that giant brain destined to illumine the world with the rays of his genius! Who knows how many plays had been conceived and worked out within those four walls? To me, the spot was hallowed ground. I could not inscribe my name on these sacred panels. It seemed almost sacrilege for me to sit down in his chair, but I did so; and begged to be left alone for a time, that I might meditate on the life and genius of the greatest of poets.

"It was not without a feeling of regret that I

tore myself away from this hallowed shrine. I wandered through the almost deserted streets, and read the names over the village shops. 'William Shakespeare' here caught my eye; 'John Shakespeare' there; descendants, no doubt, of the great poet. Shakespeare seemed a common name here. I wondered whether any of them inherited his genius. No matter, it would be something to say that one was descended from so great a man, without possessing any further recommendation. I called upon a certain William Shakespeare, and inquired into his pedigree. He seemed a very ordinary sort of personage. He did not appear to know, nor yet to care much, if he were really descended from the bard or no. There was no genius about *him*. I called upon another, and then another, bearing the name of the poet, but could not discover the slightest spark of the fire that kindled the soul of the great dramatist in any one of them. I strolled on to the church, and visited the tomb. A sensation of awe crept over me as I read the simple couplet engraved over the vault containing the ashes of the bard—

Blessed be he who spares these stones,
And cursed be he who moves my bones.

"I shuddered to think of the awful consequences that might ensue to the sacrilegious hand that

should dare move his honoured dust. There was his effigy placed within a niche in the wall of the church, high up above the heads of the congregation, and gave the idea of being placed in a sort of pulpit. The bust was but a rude work of art, but it had the reputation of being the only authentic likeness of the poet; and, therefore, it was with intense interest that I scanned the features. I fancied that I could descry, in spite of the rude workmanship of the stonemason, certain lines about the mouth and eyes that indicated that droll humour displayed in his comedies. I stood rooted to the spot.

"Around me were the tombs of the Lucy family; close to the poet's own dust the graves of his wife and daughter. But let me hasten to the more important point in my narrative.

"After I left the church I was shown the dead of the Lucy family, and obtained permission to wander over the grounds. 'In that house,' I said to myself, 'lives the lineal descendant of that squire before whom the bard was brought for poaching, and whom afterwards he is supposed to have caricatured under the title of "Justice Shallow."'

"I wandered alone through the forest of Arden, and seemed to imbibe inspiration from the surrounding scenery. I called up scenes from *As*

You Like It, and other plays. I sat down on the grass in a wooded spot, and watched the deer.

"'Here,' I thought to myself, 'must be the spot where the melancholy Jacques moralised on the wounded deer. Yonder, perhaps, where he met the fool in the forest.' I mused awhile, and then opened my Shakespeare at the scene of Rosalind and Celia, followed by Touchstone, and became deeply engrossed.

"I might have been half an hour poring over this scene, when I lifted my eyes from my book and beheld coming towards me in the distance the slim and graceful form of a lady, reading a book which was bound in the same fashion as the book I was reading, and which, therefore, I concluded must be a Shakespeare. She approached with her eyes still fixed on the book. At length, as I gazed on her she closed the book, and her eyes met mine.

"'Edith!' I cried. 'Do I dream still, or is it indeed yourself in the flesh?'

"She was no less surprised than myself.

"'Charles!' she exclaimed, 'how have you tracked me hither? Did you know of'—

"'Tracked you, Edith!' I exclaimed, 'I knew nothing of your whereabouts. This is the hand of Fate.'

"'Oh, Charles, is it possible!' she cried. 'To think that we should live to meet in the flesh.'

"We embraced, and strolled under the trees together.

"'Shall I awake from this,' I kept saying to myself, 'and find it also a dream?'

"We both of us began to doubt whether we were sleeping or waking. She informed me that her adopted parents, for she was a foundling, as I learnt, had taken her with them, away from home for the summer for change of air; and, as she had often expressed a wish to visit the spot where she had been first picked up by her present parents when a baby of a week old, she begged Squire and Mrs. L—— to take her to Stratford-on-Avon, a place of double interest to her.

"She invited me to her house, and introduced me to the squire and his lady, who both remarked how much we resembled each other in feature. I frequented the house much, and Edith and I were in the habit of taking long walks together. It is hardly necessary to say that I was not introduced as the young man Edith used to meet in her dreams. The tale would have been too startling, and would not have been credited; and yet Edith had been so entirely under the surveillance of her parents, that it was impossible for her to have formed

an acquaintance with anyone without their knowledge, so I had to trump up some story—indeed, I scarce know what—about rescuing her from a bull, just to account for our acquaintance.

"We were left much alone. Little did the parents think what an old attachment ours was; and for a long time I thought the squire looked favourably on my suit, but when matters were advanced so far that I demanded her in marriage, he drew up stiffly, and inquired into the state of my finances. I boasted of my family, but was obliged to own that as far as money matters went, I was afraid that by my own fortune I could hardly hope to keep his adopted daughter in that style to which she had been accustomed.

"He hummed and hawed; but Edith broke in, begged and wept, saying she had never loved before, and vowed that she never would love another. At length the squire, with some reluctance, gave his consent, but said that I must find something to get my own living, and I am consequently looking out for some mercantile employment.

"'To such base uses must we come at last,'" he quoted, with a sigh.

"Yes," said I, "rather a come-down from a king; but, never mind what it is, as long as it pays well."

I saw him wince at this speech of mine; his romantic nature revolted against all thoughts of making money, however pressing his needs might be.

We parted, and I called upon him about a week after, when I found he was making grand preparations for his marriage. He informed me that he had got his eye upon some appointment, but that he should have to wait. There was a certain air of sadness about his face still. He did not look like a man about to be married.

"Doctor," said he, "do you know what I have been thinking of late?"

"No," I replied.

"I have been thinking that this marriage of mine will never come off," he said.

"Why?" I asked. "Have you had some lovers' quarrel?"

"No," he replied.

"Why, then? Has the squire changed his mind, after having given his consent?" I demanded.

"No; nor that either," he replied. "I cannot myself give you my reason for the fancy—it is a presentiment. You know, 'the course of true love never *did* run smooth.'"

"Oh!" said I, soothingly, "that is your

fancy; you are nervous and impatient — it is natural."

"No, no!" he said; "I am sure of it—I feel it."

"What! Have you been dreaming that it would not?"

"No; I never dream now," he replied.

"I am glad to hear it," I observed; "it is a good sign. When does the wedding take place?"

"To-morrow was the day appointed, but it won't take place, I say. Mark my word."

"So soon! But what can have put it into your head that it will not take place to-morrow? Do you know of any impediment likely to occur between this and then?"

"No," he replied; "none for certain, but I tell you, once for all, it will not take place."

I did not know exactly what to make of this strange monomania. My suspicions were again aroused as to the brain being affected. I did not see what could happen to hinder the marriage, so I left him, after cheering him as much as I possibly could, determining within myself to call upon him as soon after his marriage as was convenient, to triumph over him and laugh at his presentiments; but this was the last time I ever saw Charles.

Shortly after this, my last, visit I was glancing rapidly over the paper at breakfast when I was shocked to see among the list of deaths the name of Charles ——, aged twenty-four. Strange enough, I had been dreaming of him much the night previous. What was my surprise and dismay when, looking lower down the column, I saw also the death of Edith L——. I looked at the date of both deaths. To my still further surprise, both lovers had departed this life at exactly the same hour—at midnight, October 12th, 17—.

"What a strange coincidence," I thought. "What strange beings both of them were! They did not appear either to belong to or to be fitted for this world. They were evidently never destined for an earthly lot together."

"The hand of Providence is in this," I muttered.

I grieved much for the loss of my two patients, for I had conceived quite a fatherly affection for them both. As soon as decency would permit, I called upon the parents of Charles. The account they gave of the reason of his death caused me no little surprise. It appeared that, on the eve of his marriage, his mother received a badly-written and ill-spelt letter, from a person who professed to have known the family a long time, begging

her to call upon the writer, who was then in a dying state, and had an important communication to make.

Mrs. ——, curious to know who the writer could be, called at the address given in the letter, which proved to be a miserable hovel in one of the back slums of London. There, stretched upon a wretched pallet, lay the squalid and emaciated form of an old woman, whom, after some difficulty, Mrs. —— recognised as the monthly nurse who attended her four and twenty years ago, during her confinement.

"Who are you?" asked Mrs. ——.

"Look at me. Do you recollect me now?" inquired the hag.

"How should I? I never saw you before. Stay, your features seem to grow more familiar to me, now my eyes get accustomed to the light. Is it possible you can be Sarah Maclean, the midwife who"—

"The same," responded the hag.

"What would you of me?" inquired Mrs. ——.

"I have a communication to make before I die," said the old woman. "Listen."

And she began her confession in feeble tones, thus—

"You were not aware, ma'am, that the day

before your son was born, I myself was confined with twins—a boy and a girl. Being called upon the next day to attend upon you, I waited to see if your child were a male child or a female. Finding that it was a man child, I took advantage of the agony I saw you were in, deeming that my act would never be discovered. I managed to conceal my own child under my shawl, and so contrived to substitute my child for your own."

"Wretch!" cried Mrs. ——, gasping.

"Stay; hear me out. I've got more to tell," continued the hag. "Your own son died shortly after you had given him birth, through my neglect —I admit it."

"Murderess!" screamed Mrs. ——.

"Bear with me yet awhile," said the midwife, "while I have still breath left to confess all. I wished that one of my children should do well in the world, and I adopted the stratagem I have just confessed to you.

"As for my other child, being a girl, I was anxious to get her off my hands as soon as possible, so I left her at the foot of a tree near Stratford-on-Avon, where I myself was born."

"What have I to do with all your other crimes, wicked woman?" exclaimed Mrs. ——.

"They rest between yourself and your Maker. Spare me further confession."

"Stay awhile yet," said the old woman, in still feebler tones. "My second crime concerns you perhaps in scarce a less degree than my first. My daughter, as I heard afterwards, was picked up by a certain Squire L——, and, having no children of his own, it is likely he will make her his heiress."

"What!" cried Mrs. ——; "then Miss L——, who is engaged to my son—at least to—to is, in fact, your—your daughter? Then they are twin brother and sister!" and Mrs. —— fell back in hysterics.

"Wretch! Infamous woman!" cried Mrs. ——, scarcely recovered from her fit. But when she gazed again at the withered form before her, behold the evil spirit had left its tenement. Sarah Maclean was no more.

When Mrs. —— returned home, she communicated the mournful tidings to Charles and Edith, who were together at the time—tidings which, of course, put a stop to their union.

They both received the news in a state of stupefaction. Neither wept. Their grief was too deeply seated to give vent to itself in tears. They could not, after having loved each other as they had loved,

look upon each other in the light of brother and sister, and as their union was impossible, they agreed that it would be better to part at once and for ever. They embraced and parted, each vowing never to love again. That night both were stricken with a violent fever, and on the night of October 12th, at the midnight hour, the spirits of both lovers were released from their mortal tenements. Let us hope that they are now at rest!

. . . . . .

Two years after the death of Charles and Edith, finding myself in the neighbourhood of my old friend Squire L——, I called at the house. He was glad to see me, as usual; but I thought he looked very much aged. The death of his adopted daughter, whom he loved tenderly, had been a great blow to him. I should not have liked to touch upon a subject so painful, had he not broached the matter first himself, and asked me if I had heard of the circumstances that led to the death of Edith and her lover. I replied that I had heard all from Charles' mother.

"And who do you think that Edith and Charles turned out to be?" he asked. "Why, lineal descendants of the great Bard of Avon," he said.

"Is it indeed so?" said I.

"Yes," he replied; "after the death of my poor Edith I was curious to know something about her real mother. I made inquiries into her pedigree, and the report I heard from more than one quarter was—well, it is a long story; and, at some future time, when we are not likely to be interrupted, I may relate it to you. Suffice it to say, that the descent of Charles and Edith may be distinctly traced from our great Bard, William Shakespeare.

"Strange," I observed. "It is not impossible that some of the great poet's genius might have run in the veins of Charles. He always impressed me as a young man of great intellect. He might have been something had he lived."

"Oh, yes," replied my friend; "I am certain of it. He was a very promising young man; and there was Edith, as full of genius as she could be, poor child. I tell you, doctor, it was marvellous what that girl had in her."

"Oh, I believe it," I said. "There was something extremely intelligent in her expression, if I may use the word; perhaps I ought to say, intellectual and poetical. Well, genius, though seldom inherited from father to son, rarely dies out of the family altogether, but often, after lying dormant for generations, breaks out again in some form or another, like certain diseases."

"Yes, doctor," said my friend; "I have observed the fact myself, and how seldom do we find genius unaccompanied with disease. Do you know, doctor, I often thank Heaven that I am no genius?"

"ALWAYS GALLANT TOWARDS THE FAIR SEX, I SALUTED HER."

THE DREAM OF TOUGHYARN

"Come unto these yellow sands."

—*Tempest.*

WELL, messmates, I don't know whether I am sufficiently clear up aloft to recollect all the details of my dream; but hold hard a moment, perhaps I can. Ah! yes; I remember now. I was on board my good ship, the *Dreadnought*, which was bound for Timbuctoo. I was seated in my cabin, making an entry in the log, when I was aroused by a noise of shouting on deck. I thought I would go and see what was adrift; but hardly was I out of the cabin when, in the twinkling of a bowsprit, I found myself pinioned.

The crew were in a state of mutiny, and headed by the first mate. I was speedily lashed to the mizzen, when Ned Upaloft (that was the name of the first mate), presenting a brace of pistols at my face, called upon me to yield.

"Avast, there! Ned Upaloft," I cried; "and you, Jack Haulaway, with the whole gang of you,

and tell me what the blazing gunpowder is the meaning of all this mutinous conduct."

"No more palaver, but yield," Upaloft cried.

"Never!" I answered.

"Then you're a dead man," he said.

"Fire!" said I; "you may take my life, but never will I yield up my power to a pack of mutineers."

His finger was on the trigger, and the next moment I expected to be my last.

I must mention that the whole of that day the weather had been extremely sultry. A storm arose suddenly, and the ship pitched and rolled tremendously. All the crew were in liquor, and the helm was deserted. At the moment I expected it was all up with me, a terrible flash of lightning struck the barrels of the pistols, which went off of their own accord, luckily missing me.

Ned Upaloft was struck blind. The crew were sobered for a moment.

"Behold," said I, reaping advantage from the confusion, "behold, how Heaven rescues her own. So may it go with all mutineers. Look up aloft," said I (a flight of Mother Cary's chickens just then passed overhead). "Look! has that no warning? What are those but the souls of departed mariners, who have come to beckon you to your doom?"

A terrific clap of thunder almost instantaneously followed the flash, and drowned my last words, The crew looked irresolute as to whether they should renew their attack or throw down their arms and yield themselves as mutineers; but they were roused by the voice of Jack Haulaway, the second mate, who cried out—

"What! are you scared at the thunder and this man's words? Ho! there; reef the main-top-gallant sail."

The crew looked up aloft and hesitated, for the top mast threatened to snap every moment.

"Come, look sharp, or in two minutes we shall all be drifting under bare poles. What! you're afraid? Cowards that you all are. It will have to be done. I'll go myself."

And up went Jack Haulaway; but hardly had he taken in a reef, when the mast snapped, and main-top-gallant sail, Jack Haulaway, and all were blown far away into the sea."

"Behold the fate of your second commander," said I. "Look to yourselves now, for your time is not far off."

The waves were now so enormous that the vessel was soon on her beam ends. Smash went the bowsprit as it struck against a rock; crash, crash, went one mast after the other, until we were literally

drifting under bare poles. It was difficult for the sailors to maintain their equilibrium, and several fell overboard. I looked for the first mate. He had disappeared.

Some of the sailors clung to the fragments of the vessel and tried to pray, others supplied themselves with grog, till they lost all consciousness. One of the men came forward to me, and, unloosing me, begged my pardon; said he bore me no malice, and if he hadn't been in liquor, he would never have joined the gang.

We all shook hands, for we deemed our last hour had come; and so, indeed, it had for most of us. In another moment the vessel was dashed against a rock, filled with water, and went down.

Some made for the lifeboat, others for pieces of floating timber. The storm still continued with increasing fury. The sky was black as pitch, and the waves the size of mountains. Planks, hencoops, and other fragments of the wreck were floating about in all directions. Most of the crew, if not all, must have been swallowed up by the waves, for, as I looked around me, I saw no one. As for myself, well, espying a cask of rum floating and bobbing about near me I of course hurriedly struck out and was soon astride it, saved so far—and thus I was left to the mercy of the winds and waves.

Up one wave, down another, still I held on to my cask, out of which every now and then I'd take a drop, just to keep out the cold; then replacing the bung, became at last very contented with whatever direction the waves chose to toss me. The lightning flashed and the thunder growled around me.

It was for all the world like being inside an immense big drum, and Davy Jones drumming his tattoo outside. As I was being dashed to and fro by the merciless billows, I thought I heard, mingled with the dying tones of the thunder, the sound of a harp and singing. Could it be fancy? I listened again. No. I was quite sure this time my ears did not deceive me. The notes grew more and more clear, the voice more and more distinct. Yet, who could it be? There was no land near for hundreds of miles. It could be no mortal harper that touched those chords, nor earthly singer being accompanied. I looked around me in wonderment, but saw nothing. At length I was carried to the top of a tremendous wave, and as I was sliding down the other side of it astride my good preserver, I perceived coming towards me from the opposite wave a female form, beautiful as Venus, and what's more, naked to the waist.

Good Heavens! it was a mermaid. Yes, there could be no mistake. Her golden tresses fluttered

in the breeze, and every now and then I caught a glimpse of a large dolphin-like tail of a greenish hue, that, at every movement she made, gleamed like silver. We could not help meeting each other; so, as I was always gallant towards the fair sex, I saluted her. Heavens! What eyes! What teeth! What features! But above all, O Davy! her smile.

Gentlemen, I assure you her beauty was divine. Talk about sentiment! But words are wanting to express even the thousandth part of her charms. Enough, gentlemen, that all that is innocent, virtuous, and heavenly, was expressed in that smile she gave me.

"Angel of Beauty!" I exclaimed, "whatever your name, your parentage, your birthplace, I vow"—

"Toughyarn, Toughyarn," said a voice within me, "don't make an old fool of yourself. Mermaids are deceitful and dangerous, however beautiful, as you will find out to your cost before long. Think of your age, your position. Is it likely you can excite a genuine passion in any maid? For shame, sir. How can you appear romantic in her eyes, astride a grog cask. Only reflect a little."

But I would not reflect. I stifled the voice within me, and, abandoning myself to the impulse

of my passion, pressed my hand to my heart, and was about to burst out afresh, when the fair one, fixing her large deep blue eyes upon me—deep as the Mediterranean in a calm—with a supernaturally winning smile, addressed me thus, in tones to which the softest music was discord—

"Welcome, Captain Toughyarn, to our haunts. Welcome to the Mermaid Grotto of pearl and coral, to my father's palace. It is long that we await you. We have heard much of your exploits by sea, and we are all impatient to make the acquaintance of a hero so illustrious."

"What!" I cried; "you have heard of me and expected me, O fair one?"

"Yes, captain, our Sybil has prophesied your arrival here, and your visit to our palace. Oh, she told me many things about you that she has seen in vision. The mutiny of your crew, your first mate struck with blindness when about to take your life. The loss of your second mate while reefing a sail. Your release by one of the crew, after having been bound to the mast; the wreck of your vessel; and, finally, our meeting, which tallies in the minutest particulars."

"What!" I exclaimed, in extreme astonishment, "all this she saw—even the grog barrel?"

"All—everything," replied my charmer; "but

follow me, and lose no time; we all await you below."

So saying, she beckoned to me with the most bewitching smile, and floundered away from me, lashing her tail playfully as she went, and touching the chords of her harp, sang so sweetly, so divinely, some submarine ditty about fairy palaces, halls of coral, and fair mermaidens, that all resistance was vain.

"Don't be weak, Toughyarn," said the voice again; "resist her wiles, be deaf to her song."

But I was deaf only to the voice that warned me.

"Divine enchantress," I cried, "I will follow you wherever you go."

A wave now dashed me forward till I found myself by her side.

"Are you really willing to accompany me?" she asked, with a gleam that made me feel—I don't know how.

"To the utmost corners of the earth," I replied.

"And even to the depths of the ocean?" she asked.

"Even there," I replied. "Anywhere, anywhere with thee, for *I love thee.*"

The murder was out. She heaved a sigh, and her head sank on my shoulder.

"Take care, Toughyarn," said the voice; "be

warned ere it be too late." This was the last time the voice spoke to me. It *was* too late.

"And do you really love me?" she asked, gazing up into my face, her large blue eyes filling with tears.

"With all my heart and soul," I replied.

"And are you prepared to give me a proof of your love?"

"Any proof you may desire, my angel," I answered. "What is it?"

"I mean," she said, "would you be ready to make a *very great sacrifice*?"

"Anything," I replied; anything for thee."

"Generous mortal!" she exclaimed, and she sobbed aloud.

The sight of beauty in tears always moved me. I was deeply touched at this outburst of grief on the part of my charmer, and did all I could to soothe and comfort her. I put my arm round her delicate waist; she offered no resistance, so, clasping her to my breast, I—I—well, gentlemen—I kissed her. The lightning played around me; the thunder crackling, threatened to break the drum of my ear, but I saw nothing, I heard nothing; I was unconscious of everything around me in that long loving kiss.

My lips seemed glued to hers. I thought I

should never be able to tear myself away. I felt her heart beat violently against my waistcoat. My blood tingled in my fingers and toes with the intensity of my passion. I no longer felt cold, for I bore a fire within.

When I at length removed my lips from hers, with a prodigious smack, she fell fainting in my arms. It was as if her whole soul had been poured forth in that one kiss, and there was none left to reanimate the frail form. I sprinkled some of her native element in her face, and she recovered.

I petted and caressed her, clasped her again and again to my breast, while she clung round my neck, confessing her love for me, and begging me never to desert her. Oh, the rapture of those moments! She vowed that I was all in all to her, that she had never loved before, and never should again; that she was mine, body and soul, and that if I ever ceased to love her, she should die.

She called me "her own dear Toughyarn, her hero, her beau ideal, her lover, her husband." She said that "I was her master, and that she would be my slave for life."

I vowed that I was unworthy to pick of the seaweed that adhered to her tail. At the word "tail," she heaved a deep sigh, and, glancing at my lower extremities, burst into a fresh flood of

tears. I was unable to account for these weeping fits, to which she seemed subject.

"Some female caprice," thought I; "nothing more."

"What ails thee, my beloved?" I said tenderly. "Say why, O bewitching enchantress, do those pearl drops continue to pay their tiny tribute to the great ocean?"

"Oh!" she cried to herself, clasping her hands and looking upward, "I feel the sacrifice is *too* great. It will cost him dearly; but has he not promised?"

"Promised!" I muttered. "What is this sacrifice, I wonder, that she requires of me? What can it be but always to live with her in her own home, under the sea. When once my soul is united with hers," I reasoned, "we shall be one being. I shall be able to live under the water as well as on *terra firma*. And what have I to make me wish to return to land? I am a widower without family. I've no fortune; in fact, I am all but a ruined man, and I feel anxious to begin a new phase of existence. The sacrifice, after all, is not so great. What does it matter to me where I live, as long as I can bask the livelong day in the sunshine of such beauty?"

I felt that that long ambrosial kiss, the intensity

of which had so exhausted my beloved, had imparted to me a new life. I no longer dreaded or believed in the possibility of being drowned. I felt an intense desire to behold the wonders of the deep, and visit those palaces of coral and mother-of-pearl that I had so often heard of, so seizing my beloved by the waist, I exclaimed—

"Come, O joy of my soul; lead me to the hall of thy father. Let us plunge into the turbulent billows. I thirst for thy element. I feel irresistibly drawn down by some new power that has come over me."

"Follow me, then, my beloved," she said, and with one splash disappeared beneath the waves.

To kick away my cask and plunge in after her was the work of a moment. I dived down, down, down, till I caught up my charmer, and we both dived together side by side. Down, down, down, deeper, deeper, and deeper still we dived through forests of seaweed, startling away all sorts of curiously formed fish and sea monsters in our rapid course.

I thought I should never get to the bottom. At length, after long continued diving, I thought I descried, gleaming through the waters, the mother-of-pearl roofs and pinnacles of various edifices; nor was I deceived, for as I dived deeper, I could

distinguish a great city, built in a wild, weird, grotesque style of architecture, thoroughly new to me, yet grand in design, far above human conception.

There were castles on rocks, both the rock and the castle being formed out of one immense piece of coral, either white or red. The rock was hollowed out by nature, and natural staircases of the same material branched off in different directions, and led to the castle above. There were grottoes of mother-of-pearl, bridges of clustering and festooned coral, intermixed with common rock, and overgrown in parts by large quaint sea plants, which hung down in long creepers, entangling and festooning themselves, crossing and recrossing each other, and communicating the upper part of the city with the lower, the town being built partly on hills, and partly in the valleys.

Immense pits and hollows, in what in other cities would have been the road, appeared to lead to some part of the city below. Crowds of the inhabitants were seen emerging from these grottoes, and disappearing through others. Several were seated in chariots of mother-of-pearl and turtle-shell, drawn by some hideous sea monster. There were mermen, bearded and muscular, bearing in their hands tridents; troops of mermaids of every conceivable variety of beauty, from the blue eyes

and flaxen hair of the north, to the dark, Oriental type. Gigantic zoophytes and sea anemones opened their petals at us from every parapet. Music and singing was heard everywhere, and the submarine grottoes echoed with the strains of fair mermaidens. Groups of dancers surrounded us as we descended, twisting their lithesome bodies into all sorts of elegant and fantastic attitudes; beautiful mer-children sported with the most hideous sea monsters it was possible to conceive.

The city seemed wealthy, the inhabitants contented, and yet there was little or no sign of industry amongst them. All the houses and palaces were evidently formed by the hand of nature, save where here and there a window or a mother-of-pearl roof or pavement betrayed manual skill. Money, as I ascertained, was an article unknown to the submarines. They had few wants, and lived peacefully amongst themselves.

As my fair bride and I swam through the streets of this great city together, my appearance attracted great curiosity. The children were frightened, and darted away into some grotto hard by. I heard an old white-bearded merman, who had, doubtless, seen a great deal in his day, call out, "A landman! a landman!"

I began to feel fatigued after diving so long, and was greatly relieved when my companion halted in front of a large portico with pillars of the most delicate pink coral, and said, "This is my father's palace."

The mer-princess (for her father was no less than a king), instead of knocking at the door, ran her fairy-like fingers over the strings of her lyre, and wrung from it chords of such a wild and unearthly strain, that it seemed like the distant wail of souls in purgatory.

The door was opened by an immense shark, standing on the tip of his tail. He opened and shut his huge mouth at us by way of salute, and ventured so far as a wink of recognition at me as we entered the hall, which was paved with mother-of-pearl, inlaid with pale coral and turtle-shell. My fair one conducted me through many passages and corridors, the roofs and walls of which were covered over with every sort of curious and beautiful shell found under the sea, till at length we entered the dais chamber of the king, and I was introduced to his majesty, and to his serene consort, who both received me graciously.

Formalities over, a richly liveried mer-attendant announced that the royal sea-serpent, harnessed to the state carriage, awaited their majesties' pleasure.

The mer-king affably offered me the use of his carriage, which I gladly accepted. Their majesties, Lurline, and myself descended the stairs, and passing the portal, stepped into a magnificent car or chariot, formed of mother-of-pearl and turtle-shell, the wheels being of gold and embossed all over with the most exquisite precious stones. The coachman, or charioteer, was a stout merman, with a trident, with which he began to goad the enormous sea-serpent, who, rearing and plunging, bid fair to upset us all. However, the skilful driver, drawing the reins made of strong seaweed studded with pearls, kept him in abeyance. We then visited all the chief temples and other public buildings, and his majesty's parks and hunting grounds, chatting all the time pleasantly with my beloved Lurline, and after having spent a most enjoyable day, towards evening we returned to the palace.

It was the dinner hour. About a hundred harps from below struck up a lively air, in lieu of a dinner bell.

"Captain Toughyarn," said the king, "will you take down the Princess Lurline?"

I bowed, and offered my arm, and we swam into the dining-hall. It was a long and lofty apartment, with festoons of white and red coral pendent from the arched roof. The walls were ornamented

with choice shells in patterns, and the floor covered with a matting of plaited seaweed. The furniture was of mother-of-pearl and turtle-shell.

His majesty headed the table; his royal consort, who had come down dressed for dinner in necklaces of immense pearls, sat opposite to him. Other members of the blood royal, as well as some distinguished guests, were also present. We were waited upon by sea monsters, who handed round large open shells in their mouths which served as plates.

A saw-fish brought me a knife and fork, a porpoise changed the plates, a dolphin entered with the larger dishes, and a young whale handed round the vegetables, which consisted of different sorts of seaweed. The dinner was chiefly of fish, varied with albatross and sea-gull, the first course being oysters, by way of whetting the appetite.

The king was pleased to ask me about my adventures, so I entertained the whole dinner-table with a recital of them. The queen smiled benignantly on me, and the beautiful Lurline gazed into my face with an expression of the most undisguised admiration.

I felt myself quite the lion of the evening and had the conversation all to myself. During the repast a bevy of fair mermaidens swam round and

round the hall, and over our heads, pouring forth divine melodies on their harps.

Towards the close of the meal his majesty entered into the particulars of his own family history, and the great deeds of his ancestors, which I shall not weary your patience my dears, by retailing.

The dinner being at an end, we left the apartment, and the sea monsters, after devouring everything that was left, cleared away the plates. We strolled into the garden, which was filled with every imaginable variety of sea plants. Some grew up like palm trees and tree ferns, others were trained up against a wall, while others hung gracefully over the verandah of the palace, after the manner of creepers. Large shells, filled with sand, served as flower-pots, and contained, as his majesty assured me, plants of extraordinary rarity. I forget their more extraordinary names.

A sword-fish acted as head gardener; he was digging away with his proboscis with tremendous intent as we entered, and a saw-fish infused with the spirit of the master-gardener, was raking the flower-beds.

It was already evening, and was getting dark. The king ordered the saloon to be lighted up, when two lusty mermen brought the lamps, which they hung in the corners of the apartment, and which

consisted of shells, to each of which were attached three chains of pearls, the bowl of the lamp being filled with those phosphoric animalculæ that are to be seen at night round the prow of a vessel when the keel disturbs them as it ploughs its course through the ocean.

The saloon being lighted, musicians were called. They were of both sexes; sturdy mermen, with gongs and sea-horns; those of the gentler sex with harps. I was asked if I could dance, and replying that I could after the fashion of my country, the music struck up a merry tune, and a number of fair sirens insisted on me joining in the dance.

The dance commenced; it was a curious step, consisting of a wriggle of the upper part of the body, and a splash with the tail. They formed a circle, each taking hold of the other's hand, closing and widening several times; then letting go of hands, each dived down head foremost, their fingers touching the ground, flapping their tails upwards.

They went through all sorts of fantastic steps, which I tried hard to imitate, and my failures were the cause of much merriment. I was asked whether I would favour them with a dance of my country, so I danced the hornpipe. With this they were delighted, and wanted it repeated. I had to dance it again and again to please them.

Refreshments were handed round by the same sea monsters, and the evening wound up with games—hide and seek, blind man's buff—and other amusements.

The queen said she was glad to see me enjoy myself so much. One bewitching young siren, fixing her dark eyes upon me, and then looking down with a sigh, said it was pleasing to see such a great hero as I was condescending to take part in their humble games. Another hoped that I was in no hurry to leave them, as she was looking forward to many such pleasant evenings. A third mermaid wished that she had been born with legs, in order to learn the hornpipe. A fourth hoped I should sleep well after my fatigue.

The party at length broke up, and as I was the lion of the evening, I stationed myself near the door to shake hands with all the pretty mermaids as they swam out of the saloon. I gave a gentle squeeze to each, and I am certain that if not all, at least the greater part of these young ladies, went to bed in love with me that night. But what of Lurline? I must not forget *her*. The fact was I did not like to be too pointed in my attentions, lest it should excite suspicion, for as yet her parents knew nothing of our attachment, so I appeared rather to neglect her than otherwise.

Poor child! she retired to rest unhappy that night, fancying that I had become estranged towards her. I had no opportunity for an explanation, and after quitting the saloon was shown to my bedroom by a mer-servant girl.

The walls and ceiling of my bed-chamber were covered over with handsome shells, the floor inlaid with mother-of-pearl and coral, over which was a carpet of variegated seaweed, plaited in a pattern. The bed posts were inlaid with mother-of-pearl, agate, lapis lazuli, and other rare stones. The mattress was of very soft sponge, and the counterpane one broad piece of seaweed.

Having undressed, I blew out the candle; that is to say, I smashed the animalculæ inside the shell that the servant girl brought me in lieu of a candlestick, and tucking myself up I tried to sleep, but was haunted all night by the bright eyes of Lurline.

Towards morning I fell into a light sleep, from which I was roused by the dulcet tones of a harp at my door and the enchanting voice of Lurline singing. I leaped from my couch, donned my clothes, and welcomed her with a kiss on the sly.

"Cruel one!" she said, "I thought you had ceased to love me."

"*I* cease to love thee, sweetest! Never!"

"You are quite sure you love me, then?" she said. "And you will never desert me?"

"Desert thee! my angel," said I. "Do you think I could be so base?"

"Hush!" she whispered. "Here comes mamma," and she dived downstairs.

"Lurline, Lurline," cried her majesty, who had overheard every word of our conversation. "Lurline, come here; I wish to speak with you."

Up swam Lurline again, pale with fright. She entered her mother's room, and the queen turned the key. I heard the mother's voice within speaking angrily, and half an hour afterwards Lurline left the chamber, sobbing.

I came forward to soothe her, but she motioned me away, and put her finger to her lip. I dived after her downstairs, resolved to hear the worst. It seems her mother had scolded her for flirting; said she was too young to marry; that I was too old for her; that she knew nothing of my family; and that she must not fix her affections upon anyone who was not of royal blood.

"Here, then," thought I, "among this simple primitive people, there is as much aristocratic pride as in our more civilised countries."

What was to be done? Relinquish Lurline for

a foolish piece of barbarous pride. I couldn't and wouldn't. There was nothing left me but to speak to his majesty; assume as much dignity as I could, and boast of my pedigree.

At breakfast I thought both the king and queen cold towards me, but I appeared not to notice it, and talked away fluently about my country, my family, and insinuated, rather than said outright, that I was of royal blood.

Their manner towards me grew by degrees less frigid, and after breakfast I followed his majesty to his dais chamber, and proposed for his daughter's hand. He demurred for a long time, but I declared that in my own country I, too, had been a king; that I had been driven from my throne by my rebellious subjects; that, growing disgusted with ruling, I had sought refuge from *ennui* in a life of adventure.

His majesty, like his people, being of a simple nature, believed all I said, and left me, saying he would think about it and talk to the queen. I saw him from the window shortly afterwards in earnest conversation with her majesty in the garden. I burned to know the result of their interview.

In the course of the day one of the queen's mermaids-of-honour informed me that her majesty desired to speak with me. I entered into her presence trembling.

She accosted me thus, "Captain Toughyarn, his majesty has already acquainted me with your proposal, but before we give our consent to a marriage with our daughter, even after your assertion that you are of royal blood, we must know you a little longer. Marriages are not to be contracted in a hurry. You did very wrong to engage our daughter's affections without first consulting us in the matter. It was an insult to our royal self. However, let that pass; it is too late now. My daughter seems thoroughly to have set her affections upon you. I have lectured her severely for her imprudence; but the matter seems to have gone so far, that I fear to break her heart if I peremptorily refuse to give my consent to this marriage. If my daughter will take my advice, she will, upon reflection, break off this match. You'll excuse me, Captain Toughyarn, for saying that I think your age a decided objection."

"As regards my age, your majesty," I said, "the men of my country get grey and bald at thirty, though they maintain their youthful vigour to a prolonged period. I myself am thirty-six." (I would not say that I was sixty-three.)

Her majesty looked incredulous, and then a momentary smile crossed her features, as if she

were having a joke all to herself, but she stifled it immediately.

"There is another thing, Captain Toughyarn," said her majesty, "that perhaps you may not be aware of. Marriages between your race and ours are extremely rare. When they occur some sacrifice is always expected on the part of the gentleman, just by way of proving his love," and she glanced at my legs as she spoke. I did not quite understand her meaning.

"Sacrifice—sacrifice," I said to myself. "Ah! yes," said I, aloud; your majesty does not wish that your daughter should leave her house and visit my country. Is it not so?"

"That is part of the conditions, but not all," said her majesty.

"And what else might your majesty be pleased to exact from me?" I asked.

"Well," she said, with a smile and a second glance at my legs, "we should like you—we expect you to—to—to become in fact, like one of us—to conform"—

"Oh, quite so," I said without as yet catching her meaning thoroughly; "to conform—yes—certainly—to all the customs of the country I have adopted."

"To *all* of them, mind."

"Yes."

"Then you consent to this trifling sacrifice. You have no objection to—to be operated upon?"

"Operated upon!" I cried in astonishment. "What?—How?—I don't quite catch your majesty's meaning."

"Well, Captain Toughyarn," said her majesty, "if I *must* be more explicit, the fact is, that legs are out of fashion here, only tails are worn in this country. If you really wish to marry our daughter, you must submit to an operation."

"W-h-e-w!" whistled I, the real nature of the sacrifice dawning upon me for the first time. "So that is your meaning!"

"Precisely. Do you refuse?"

Now, I always prided myself particularly on my legs. In my youth they were the admiration of the sex; even now they are far from contemptible, and to give them in exchange for a tail was of all things the furthest from my thoughts. I did not know what to answer.

At length I asked, "And this operation—how is it performed, your majesty?"

"Oh, it is simple enough," was the reply. "A surgeon is called, who amputates the lower extremities; a dolphin or other large fish is procured, which, after being killed, is cut in halves, and

the tail half of the fish is bound to that part of your body still suffering from the operation, until the parts unite, and the transformation is complete."

"I am infinitely obliged to your majesty," said I, "but I hope you will pardon me if I refuse to comply with this last condition. Legs such as mine are extremely prized in my country; in fact, they are only to be found in those of the blood royal, and I really could not consent to part with such a very strong mark; indeed, perhaps, the only mark of royalty about my person."

"Then you refuse?"

"Absolutely," said I, bowing.

"In that case," said the queen, "I must talk to his majesty, to see what can be done."

The queen rose. I bowed, and left the apartment.

Shortly afterwards I heard the king's voice in great wrath, calling out, "What! he won't sacrifice his legs? Did you say he *won't*? *Won't*, indeed! I'll let him know who the mer-king is. He comes here uninvited, wheedles himself into our daughter's affections, and then his love is found wanting at the proof. He won't even give up his hideous legs, and wear a respectable tail for *her* sake. By my trident, he shall for *mine*. I'll tail him. Here, Thomas!" That was the name of

the shark that opened the door for us. "What ho! Thomas, bite off that insolent stranger's legs this instant. Come, make haste, and lose no time about it."

I happened to be looking out of my bedroom window at the time, which was open. At these words I plunged through the casement and struck out upwards. I had not proceeded very far—though in all my life I never struck out as I did then—when I heard the palace door open and the splash of the huge monster behind me. I struck out upwards, upwards, ever upwards, but the immense fish was at my heels with the rapidity of lightning.

Truly, I thought my last moment was at hand. With the energy that despair alone gives, I struck out so frantically, that even the shark had hard work to keep up with me, but I was fast getting exhausted.

What should I do when completely so? There seemed no hope for me.

"While strength lasts, I'll use it," said I, to myself, and struck out more desperately than ever, but the shark gained upon me, nevertheless.

At length, after repeated exertions, my head appeared once more above water. Once more I felt the fresh breeze on my bald pate.

"Thank heaven!" I cried.

There was a vessel in sight, not far off. I hailed her, bawling out with all my might and main, still swimming furiously. The shark was now nearer than ever. He had already turned on his back, preparatory to biting off my legs, and the ship, though she had noticed my distress, and was coming fast to my rescue, was not sufficiently near as yet to save me.

"I felt the tip of the monster's nose against my shoe. I lunged out a tremendous kick, which ought to have sent several of its teeth down its throat; at any rate, it sent him backward about a foot. Meanwhile, I struck out more fiercely than ever, but the brute recovered itself and was at me again.

My strength was now quite exhausted. How I managed to hold out so long puzzles me now. I was about to sink from sheer exhaustion. In another moment my legs must have been off, had not one of the officers of the ship thrown out a rope, which I clutched eagerly, and being speedily hauled on deck, the monster was baulked of its prey.

Whilst yet dangling in air, before my feet had time to touch the deck, I heard a "bang," and, looking behind me, to my intense relief, I saw the

corpse of my dread foe bobbing up and down in the waves, and staining the water with his blood.

"So much for Thomas," thought I.

The sailors were just about to lug it on board, when at this juncture I awoke.

Lucky for me that my flight was so precipitate. If *she* had crossed my path at the last moment, I thoroughly believe the very sight of her sweet face would have made me consent to the operation. Poor Lurline! But what is the use of giving way to sensibility? And, as to losing one's legs, it is bad enough to lose them in an engagement for the honour and glory of one's country, but to have them bitten off by a shark, or amputated by a mer-surgeon, at the caprice of a mer-king, and a fish's tail substituted in lieu thereof, is a thing that Toughyarn can't quite stomach.

Supposing me to have been weak enough to have submitted to the operation at the tears and entreaties of Lurline, it becomes a very different matter when my limbs are exacted as a forfeiture, and imperiously demanded by an infuriated parent.

Toughyarn may be as weak as a child in the hands of a pretty woman, but he won't be *forced* to anything by the greatest tyrant that ever existed.

"HOLDING IN HIS HAND THE DIMINUTIVE PRINCESS."

THE PIGMY QUEEN

ONCE upon a time—I think, in Germany, grandmother said that it happened; but I am not quite sure; perhaps it never happened at all; but if it did, it was very far off, and a long time ago—there lived a very wicked king, who, to increase his power, had leagued himself with the evil one, and used to practise witchcraft. All sorts of witches and wizards were encouraged at his court, and the land soon became insufferable. Many wealthy citizens being persecuted by the malice of these creatures fled the country.

It happened one day, however, in the very midst of his crimes, that the bad king died, and was succeeded by his son, who proved in every respect the very reverse of his father. He was a good man, of a peaceful and amiable disposition, and who had received an education far superior to that given generally to the laity at that time.

He had married lately a foreign princess of great wit and beauty, and, on ascending the throne,

his first act was to rid his realm of all the witches and wizards which had infested it in his father's time. He threatened with death all those who should be found in the land after ten days.

These tidings were received with murmurs of disapprobation by all these wicked people, who would fain have wrought a charm upon the king to kill him, if they could; but the king, being a good man, was under the protection of the good fairies. Nevertheless, the populace were delighted at this determination of their monarch's, having known nothing but oppression and persecution under the reign of the late king.

A few days after the good king had given out his stern edict he was seated on his throne, with his consort beside him, when he was informed that a poor woman without desired to speak with him.

The king, ever open to compassion, imagining it to be some poor widow oppressed by an unfeeling and dishonest tyrant, who sought redress for her wrongs, ordered her to be admitted into his presence. The guards accordingly made way for her, and a wild, ragged, squalid, and malignant-looking beldame prostrated herself at the monarch's feet.

"O king," she pleaded, "thou who art great and mighty, have mercy on the poor and houseless, and cease to persecute those that do thee no harm.

Know that I am queen of the witches, a race much patronised by thy late father of blessed memory, and who were accounted worthy to dine at his table and be his constant companions."

To which the good king replied, "My father's reign is over. Another and more virtuous king now rules the land. My father encouraged the evil, I the good. Ye have heard our order; our word is irrevocable."

Then the hag prostrated herself before the queen, and begged with much fervour that she should intercede with the king for her, that he might milden her sentence.

But the queen replied, "I have no other will than that of my husband, whose sole desire it is to benefit his country by exterminating the wicked. If I granted your request I should be an enemy to my country."

Then the witch queen, rising to her feet and standing erect, spake to the queen and said, "For this inclemency I curse both thee and thy husband; and thy firstborn daughter whom thou shall shortly bring into the world shall be a dwarf, and shall know much tribulation."

At these words the queen was seized with great grief, and the king's ire being roused, he commanded his guards to conduct the hag from his

presence. Hardly had she departed when a bright light filled the palace and the queen of the fairies appeared in a chariot drawn by butterflies, and assured the king and queen that the blessings they should enjoy as a reward for not granting the witch's request should counterbalance the curses of the witch.

"Alas!" cried her majesty, "then the witch's curse cannot be annulled?"

"Not entirely," quoth the fairy queen; "but it can be so modified that you shall feel it but little. The witch has declared that your daughter shall be a dwarf, and dwarf she shall be; and that, too, of so diminutive a stature, as not to exceed a span in height. Nevertheless, I will bequeath to her extraordinary beauty and talents, and she shall reign long over a contented people. Great adventures she will have to go through first, but her good judgment will cause her to surmount all obstacles. Furthermore, ye shall have nothing to regret during your lifetime than that your daughter's stature is not equal to that of other mortals."

With these words the good fairy disappeared.

In due time a girl child was born, so tiny that it was hardly the length of the first joint of the queen's forefinger, but withal of such surprising beauty that the fame thereof spread throughout all the land.

The child grew and increased each day in beauty, until it reached its full growth of one span in height.

About a year after the birth of the young princess, the queen gave birth to twins, both girls, rosy and healthy, of the average size of babes.

As the three sisters grew up their mother did her best to instruct them in those duties which should fit them for good princesses, as well as good wives and mothers, when a fever then raging through the land—probably part of the witches' curse—carried off the good king and queen almost at the same time, when the eldest princess was scarce eighteen, and the three children were left in charge of a guardian.

Now, as there was no male issue, the Princess Bertha (the name of the firstborn) had every right to the throne. This she knew, nor ever deemed that her right would be disputed; but her younger sisters, who were neither so good nor so beautiful as their elder one, were suddenly seized with envy, and began to plot together in what manner they could secure the crown for themselves. They had never loved their sister nor each other, but they both agreed that the rightful heiress was to be deposed, while each of the twin sisters vaunted herself most fit to govern the country.

Neither of them had the least intention of yielding the crown to the other, though both saw the necessity of wresting it from the lawful heiress, as they said it would be absurd to permit such a farce as a dwarf queen to rule over them. Now, this led to a very hot discussion, which the Princess Bertha, who was concealed from them in some nook in the chamber, happened to overhear.

This envy of her sisters grieved her very much. She herself was not ambitious, and had her sisters been good to her, she would willingly have ceded the crown to them, but seeing their envy, her just indignation was roused, and she was determined not to be thrust aside because she was little of stature, so striding majestically up to them, and drawing herself up to the full extent of her tiny height, she angrily accosted them.

"How is it, sisters, that envy has filled your hearts, and that ye meditate an act of injustice? Know ye not that I am your lawful sovereign? The crown is mine; I will yield it to no one."

"Pooh!" cried both the sisters, with a laugh; "you could not wear it."

"No matter," said Bertha. "I will have one made on purpose."

"You!" answered one of the sisters. "Shall we have a dwarf to reign over us?"

"What has my stature to do with my lawful right to the crown?" quoth the elder. "Think you that I am an idiot as well as a dwarf? Have I not abilities equal to yours—nay, superior. Come, don't let me hear any more of this silly bickering, or I shall find means to punish you both."

These big words, proceeding from such a small body, and from one, too, who had never showed herself of an imperious disposition, but had hitherto allowed herself to be trampled upon and set at nought by them without a murmur, half-startled the twin sisters, and half-provoked their mirth.

They were enraged at such words being used towards them by one whom they thought fit to despise, and knew not what to answer, so they only looked at one another.

Now, there was something in that look which told Bertha that her sisters would make very little to-do about silencing her for ever, if she did not remain quiet; and being so small a personage, to murder her and conceal the murder would be a matter of small difficulty, so she prudently withdrew. But no time was to be lost; one of her sisters might be proclaimed queen if she did not engage the people on her side. So, wending her tiny steps to the foot of the palace stairs, she hid herself behind the hall door.

Now, in the hall were two serving men, who were discussing as to which of the twin sisters should wear the crown.

"Of course," said one, "the poor little dwarf princess won't have a chance."

"Why not?" said the other. "She is the firstborn."

"True," said the first; "if she had her rights, but you'll find that some day she will be found missing, and not likely to turn up again."

"What, you don't mean to say that"—

"Hush!" said the other, putting his finger to his lips.

Now, the Princess Bertha had heard enough of this conversation to make her wary, and perceiving that one of the serving men had his hat on and appeared about to leave the palace, she managed to creep unseen behind his chair, and climbed up into his pocket. Shortly afterwards the serving man rose up to go, and left the palace.

Then the pigmy princess, whilst snugly ensconced in the man's pocket as he walked along the street, began to reflect what should be her next step.

"Within the palace," she said to herself, "all is scheming and envy. I am easily put out of the way when they once get me. I must escape far

from the palace and put myself under the protection of the people. At any rate, I'll first have a peep at the world without."

So, thrusting her little head out of the man's pocket, she looked to the right and the left, and found herself in the middle of a large square. There was a great crowd of people, who were looking at a puppet show. The serving man whose pocket she was in also stood still to look. She, too, seized with curiosity, strained her head out of the pocket to take a peep at the puppets.

A play was being acted in which two puppet knights were fighting for the love of a fair lady. A sudden thought struck her. She would join the puppets and mix in the play; it would be a way of showing herself to the public. So she stole out of the serving man's pocket, and taking advantage of the people's absorbing interest in the play, crept stealthily over their feet, till she came to a box full of puppets on the ground. The uppermost puppet in the box was a lady, gaily attired, probably the very lady for whom the puppet knights were fighting, so she laid herself over the body of the doll, so as to be taken by the man when he wanted her, instead of the usual puppet.

The very next moment the showman, who now had to bring the lady on the scene, reached down

his hand without looking, and seizing the princess in lieu of the wooden doll, brought her upon the stage.

"Cease your broils," shouted the pigmy princess in her tiny voice. "Is it thus that noble knights waste their precious blood for the love of a woman? Is not the love of a woman at her own disposal—to be granted to the man she pleases? Will she necessarily love the victor, or will he have the arrogance to think that he can conquer her heart as he could conquer a foe? Cease, madmen, and spare your blood to grace the battlefield, or to defend the rights of woman. Ye are not too plentiful, my noble knights. The realm has much need of ye.

"Wrongs enough ye have to redress. What say ye to the grievous wrong they are trying to do the Princess Bertha, by pushing her aside, who is the firstborn, because they deem her too small to take her own part? But ye noble knights, who love justice, will assert her claim to the crown throughout the kingdom, and defeat the insolent champions hired by her envious sisters, who would defraud their own royal sovereign.

"Proclaim throughout the land that ye will have none other to rule over you but the rightful heiress—the Princess Bertha."

After the princess's harangue, the showman, who had long dropped the other puppets in amazement, believing that none other than a fairy trod his stage, stood with his eyes and mouth wide open, knowing not what to do. The spectators were in ecstasies at so beautiful and so natural-looking a puppet, while the crowd increased tenfold.

The serving man in whose pocket Bertha had hidden herself had never seen the princess, for he was not one of the servants of the palace; besides which, the diminutive princess was usually hidden from the vulgar gaze, the family being rather ashamed of her than otherwise; but one among the crowd, who happened to have seen the princess once or twice on rare occasions at the palace, cried out, "By my troth, that is the Princess Bertha herself, and none other! How comes it that she is made a puppet of in this man's vile show? Citizens, I arrest this man for high treason!"

The little princess, seeing the showman in danger, said to the gentleman, "No, worthy sir; do this man no harm, seeing I came here by my own free will, without his knowledge, for the purpose of making the country acquainted with its future sovereign."

The gentleman pushed his way through the crowd, and was about to lay his hand on the princess

to bring her back to the palace, when a monkey near at hand, also the property of the showman, and who happened at that moment to be loose, seized the diminutive princess in his arms, and clambering up the side of a house by the water spout, was soon out of sight.

Now, when the news of this catastrophe reached the palace, the twin princesses were delighted that harm was likely to befall their elder sister, so that their right to the throne might be no longer disputed ; nevertheless they ordered a strict search to be made for the body of the little princess.

Two parties, each headed by one of the princesses, started in different directions to search for the missing sister, but for a long time nothing was heard of her. Wearied at length with long search, the Princess Clothilde, one of the twins, gave out to her followers that she had found the body of her elder sister, but that it was so far decayed that she could not permit anyone to see it ; so, making believe to wrap up the body of the princess with a handkerchief, she carried it under her cloak and returned to the city, shedding false tears as she went.

Having arrived at the palace, she ordered a coffin to be made just large enough to contain the corpse she was supposed to have found, and when

it was ready she filled it with rubbish and ordered it to be interred with due honours.

Now, at that time there were two factions, one voting for the Princess Clothilde and another for her sister Carlotta. It was decided, therefore, that each should choose a champion, and she whose champion should prove victorious should rule the land.

Great were the preparations for this grand spectacle. Two stalwart knights, the stoutest and the ablest that the land could produce, each of whom had gained great reputation for feats of arms, faced each other to decide their cause. The day had arrived for the combat, and the jousts were crowded with all the great people of the land. The combatants appeared, and charged at each other furiously, but the good fairies who had already prophesied that the Princess Bertha should reign, willed not that either of the champions should win, and they caused a thick mist to rise between them, by which means they could neither of them see the other; nor was the sound of their horses' hoofs audible.

The spectators, finding that nothing could be decided on that day, went away discontented, and the fight was deferred till the next day. Again the combatants appeared in the lists, and no

obstacle seemed likely to interfere with the combat; but at the moment they commenced to charge at one another the good fairies, through their art, rendered their horses so ungovernable that each knight had enough to do to preserve his seat, and this continued all day.

A second time the spectators were disappointed, but they insisted upon the champions making a third trial. The third day arrived, but with no better success, for this time the fairies struck both knights and both horses with paralysis, so that neither could move an inch, but stood looking at each other all day, like two fools.

At first the people laughed at so droll a sight, but at length getting impatient, they heaped showers of abuse upon the two champions, calling them fools and cowards to be afraid of one another. Other champions at length took the place of the former, but the good fairies again interfered, using all sorts of impediments, so that neither could vanquish the other, and this lasted for many days, until the people despaired of ever witnessing a fight again.

Let us now return to the Princess Bertha. The fright that she experienced at finding herself in the grasp of this horrid monkey caused her to swoon away, but on recovering her senses she found

herself on the top of a tree in the midst of a forest, still in the monkey's grasp. It was out of her power to escape, so she thought she would try and ingratiate herself with her captor, so she said, "Good monkey, do me no harm, for I am a king's daughter and the rightful heiress to the crown. When I am queen I will grant you any boon you ask."

"Agreed," said the monkey; "I will hold you to your promise, for I am not a common monkey, but an enchanted prince, forced to wear this loathsome form through the malice of the witch queen in the reign of the late king, because I would not wed her daughter."

"Alas! poor monkey," said the princess, "and how long art thou doomed to wander about the earth in this disguise?"

"Until the death of the witch queen," said the monkey, "when I shall resume my customary shape."

"Ah," said the princess, "there is then hope that I may yet attain to the stature of my fellow mortals, for I, too, am under her curse."

While thus discoursing together a passer-by, perceiving the monkey in the tree, but without seeing the princess, aimed a stone at the poor ape with such force on the back of its head, that it fell

senseless to the foot of the tree. The princess deeming the animal dead, grieved much for it, and called after the man who threw the stone, scolding him; but her tiny voice was unheard, and the man was already far off.

Left alone on the top of a tree in the middle of a forest, what could she do? She began to look around her, and on the next branch she saw a crow hatching her eggs.

"Good crow," she said, "I am a king's daughter, have pity on me and carry me on thy back to a stream, for I thirst."

"I will carry you thus far," said the crow, "if you promise to grant me a boon when you wear the crown, for I am not a common crow, but an enchanted queen suffering under the evil spell of the queen of the witches."

When the princess had promised to grant her request the crow suffered her to mount on her back, and away she flew till she came to a winding stream, where she left the princess, saying, "I must now return to my eggs."

The princess having quenched her thirst, began to reflect upon the step she should next take. She knew not which way to wander, and did not care much, as long as it was far away from her sisters. She knew that the good fairies protected her, and

believed in their promise that she should be queen. Whatever hardships she might have to encounter she made up her mind were for her good. All day long she wandered by the side of the stream, over the rough stones, with her tiny feet, subsisting on berries and roots, and thus she wandered for some days without adventure.

At length, one day, having arrived at the top of a high cliff which overhung a lake, and which she had ascended to see the country that lay before her, her dress caught in a thicket, and she heard the sound of horses' hoofs behind her. It happened on that day that her two sisters had joined a hunting party and passed by in that direction.

The rest of the party passed over without observing her, but her sister Clothilde, who was behind the rest, suddenly caught sight of the little princess's shining robe, and dismounting, came up to her, saying, "So I have found thee at last, minx ; but think not to live to prove my tale false," and with that she spurned her pigmy sister with her foot, so that she fell over the cliff.

A stone which she dislodged at the same time fell into the water with a splash, and Clothilde, fancying that it was her sister who caused the splash, and that she was now hidden for ever at the bottom of the lake, rode off, rejoicing

that she had rid herself so cleverly of her hated rival.

But the Princess Bertha, instead of falling into the water, was caught half-way in the web of an enormous spider, who made towards her as if to devour her; but she said, "Good spider, harm me not, for I am a king's daughter, and when I am queen I will grant thee whatsoever boon thou askest."

"I will remember thy promise," said the spider, "for I am no common spider, but an enchanted prince, and a victim to the malice of the witch queen."

Thereupon the spider seized her gently with its legs, and letting out its thread, descending carefully with her to the bottom of the cliff. Then the spider left her, and she was once more alone on the brink of the lake.

Presently she heard the sound of a woodcutter's axe on the opposite bank of the lake. She would speak with the woodcutter, and tell him her tale; perhaps he could help her, but how was she to cross? She looked around for a moment, and saw some water lilies. One of the leaves was detached and seemed floating slowly on by itself. This she managed to reach, and it was sufficiently strong to support her light form; then, spreading out the

scarf that covered her shoulders towards the wind for a sail, she was slowly wafted to the opposite shore.

Now, as she was about to land, it happened that her foot slipped and she fell into the water, uttering a slight scream. The woodcutter, who was resting from his work, had his eyes fixed on the lake, and perceived with surprise the pigmy princess sailing towards the shore. When, therefore, he heard the scream, small as it was, he rushed down the bank and seized her slight form in his huge hand. The princess, however, was already insensible, but the good man wrung her clothes dry and kept her in his bosom until she should recover. Now, during her swoon the queen of the fairies appeared to her in a dream, and told her that the woodcutter was the man she was destined to marry, and to go at once with him to a cave hard by where lived a holy hermit, whom she had already commissioned to marry them.

Then, leaving her a magic wand which changed any object she touched into whatever she pleased, she disappeared, enjoining her to use her own judgment in everything.

Upon this she awoke, and found herself still in the woodcutter's bosom. Now, the woodcutter was a young man of a stature approaching the gigantic,

immensely powerful, but very ugly, very clumsy, and very stupid. At the first sight of him the princess recoiled, and could not make up her mind to take him for a husband; but then she thought that the fairies must know best what was for her good, so she reversed the generally received order of etiquette, and made him a proposal of marriage.

The young man simpered, scratched his head, and looked very sheepish; but having heard the princess's story, and being assured by her that the fairies had ordained it so, he turned away his head, blushed, and accepted her.

Then the princess, finding the magic wand beside her, waved it over her head, and instantly converted the peasant's ragged clothes into a suit of mail, his axe into a lance, a knife that he wore at his side into a sword; while the tree that he had just felled, she converted into a magnificent charger. She then bade him mount and place her within his helmet, close to his ear, so that she could give him any instructions that might be necessary without being observed by anyone.

Then asking Hans (which was the name of the transformed woodcutter) whether he knew where the hermit lived whom the fairy had mentioned, and receiving an answer in the affirmative, she bade him put spurs to his horse, and in a short

time they arrived at the mouth of the cave. The recluse rose to meet the man in armour.

"Good day, fair son," quoth the holy man. "What would'st thou of me?" "Holy father," said the knight, "I have come to get married."

"And the fair bride?" asked the hermit.

"She is with me."

"With thee! I see her not."

"Here, holy father, here," cried the princess, emerging from the helmet of Hans. "I am the Princess Bertha, and have been commanded by the fairies in a dream to call at thy cell with my betrothed that we may be joined together in holy matrimony."

"I know it, O illustrious princess," said the hermit, with deep reverence; "and doubt not that I shall discharge my duty. May it please your royal highness to enter the abode of the humble?"

"Dismount!" cried Bertha in the ear of her betrothed, suddenly, as if to wake him up, for the simple youth looked as if he intended to remain on the horse's back all day.

Hans dismounted clumsily, and nearly tripped himself up with his pointed iron toes.

"Now, then, tie up the horse to a tree and enter the cave, and don't look such a fool," said the princess.

Hans entered the cave, and placed himself in front of the rude altar, having unclasped his helmet and deposited his bride on a large stone near.

The hermit lit candles, opened the mass-book, and the ceremony began. As the moment for putting on of the ring drew near, a faint and distant music, together with a perfume like incense, seemed to fill the cave. Then followed a bright sunbeam, through which swam troops of fairies. Then the distant sound of trumpets was heard, and the troop made way for the chariot of the fairy queen, who, stepping out of her car of mother-of-pearl and precious stones, and standing upon a cloud of incense, handed Hans the wedding ring, and bestowed a benediction on the happy pair.

It was no easy task for Hans' clumsy fingers to place so small a ring upon so tiny a finger, but at length by the aid of a needle brought to him for the purpose, he accomplished the feat, and the marriage ceremony over, the knight and the lady rode off in the same fashion as before.

Now, it may be thought by some, perhaps, that these two were ill matched, but that only shows how the whole world may be deceived by appearances, for they were most admirably mated. It is true they had little in common with each other, but for that very reason in this case, at least, they pulled well

together. Bertha was physically weak, but then Hans was strong. Hans was as stupid as an owl, but the princess was as clear sighted as an eagle and as cunning as a fox. Bertha possessed the brains and Hans the brawny arm. Each was a type of those two items which go to make up the most perfect human being—mind and matter.

In this case the husband was not the head of the wife, but the wife the head of the husband, and a very clear little head it was, too. The princess was ever concealed in her husband's helmet, close to his ear, to give him sage councils, which he, as you shall hear farther on, often had occasion to put into practice by his superior physical strength.

The world would have chosen for Hans some rough daughter of the soil, as stupid as himself, and as nearly as possible of his own dimensions; but this sort of wife, however well she might have suited Hans in his former contented existence, would never have raised him into the hero that he afterwards became.

The humble woodcutter, beneath his rough exterior, had hidden seeds of greatness which were destined to be developed in a new soil. Our knight and his lady did not profess to love each other very much, just because they were married; indeed,

how should they upon so short an acquaintance; but that was not necessary, for love is one thing and marriage another, as all the world knows. Enough, that each had need of the other at present.

Now, the first thing to be done was to ride to the city, and for Hans to proclaim the right of the Princess Bertha to the throne; and should any other champion come forward for either of the twin princesses, it was meet that they should do battle for their cause.

"Therefore, Hans," said the princess, "ride quickly to the town, and proclaim my rights. Pass over yonder hill where stands a ruined castle."

"Let us not pass thither, fair princess," said Hans, "for yon castle is inhabited by a terrible wizard, who has lived here since the reign of your highness's grandsire, who, you will have heard, rather encouraged these sort of people than otherwise, and whom no power can force to flee the country, for as soon as the king's guards approach the castle he enchants them into rocks and fir trees."

"Oh, oh! we will see about that," said the Princess Bertha. "So this man is a dangerous character. I do not intend to allow any dangerous person when I am queen. Come, we must subdue this man."

"But"— remonstrated Hans.

"But me no buts, Sir Shaveling," quoth the princess, "but do my bidding. Must I lend thee courage as well as wit? Onward, I say."

Hans could ill brook being called a coward, and that, too, by a woman—such a little woman, too—so, crossing himself, he put spurs to his horse and ascended the hill till he arrived at the gate of the castle.

"What do *you* want?" said the wizard, suddenly making his appearance at the window.

"Say," said the princess in the ear of her husband, "that you have come in the name of the Princess Bertha, our future queen, to bid him flee the country."

Hans cried out in a loud voice as he was instructed by his spouse. The wizard answered with a loud laugh, and descended the staircase.

Now, the princess knew that evil charms availed not against good ones, so, touching her husband with her wand, she thus made him proof against any magic power of the wizard.

"Wait a bit," said the magician, descending; "you will be no harder task to manage than the rest have been, I'll warrant," and he proceeded to draw a circle on the ground and to mumble a spell.

"Enough of this mummery," said Hans, at the

instigation of the princess. Prepare to leave the country at once, or you die,"

"These words to *me*, you churl!" cried the wizard, pale with rage. "Dost know who I am?"

"I know, and I defy you—both your arms and your spells."

Then the wizard, mortified at finding that his charm failed upon Hans, entered his castle in great wrath, put on his armour, and came forth mounted on a black charger with fiery eyes, and ran at Hans furiously with his lance, but the lance was shivered into splinters against the magical armour of Hans.

The wizard then seized his two-handed sword, and Hans seizing his, a terrific combat ensued. At length Hans smote off the wizard's head at a blow, and the bleeding carcass dropped from the saddle. At the death of the wizard his fiery charger was instantly changed into a fir tree, and his castle into a rock.

"On this spot," said Bertha, "I will erect my palace," and waving her wand over the rock, a magnificent palace arose where had stood the ruined castle of the wizard, made of gold, silver, and precious stones, with windows, each pane of which was a sheet of diamond.

Hans had hardly recovered his surprise at his

unexpected victory over the wizard, when he turned his head and observed the magnificent palace that the princess had magically erected. He stood aghast, with his eyes and his mouth wide open, and seemed beside himself with amazement.

"Onward, you fool; don't stand gaping there; onward towards the town."

Hans clapped spurs to his horse, and halted not until he arrived at the gate of the city.

Then entering, he stood in the middle of a large square where there was a great crowd of people, and receiving instructions from the princess, called out to the populace: "I proclaim the Princess Bertha the rightful heiress to the crown. Whoever would depose her and set another on the throne in her stead, let him come forth and do battle."

Then some of the crowd cried out, "The Princess Bertha is dead; we have seen her funeral. Who art thou, that speakest so boldly?"

"I am the champion of the Princess Bertha, eldest daughter of the late king, and whosoever says that she is dead, lies."

So saying, he lifted his tiny spouse from his helmet with finger and thumb, and showed her to the people. Then a great commotion arose.

There were some among them who recognised the princess, and admitted her right to the throne. Others said nay; that it was a puppet, and voted for the Princess Clothilde. Others, again, shouted for the Princess Carlotta.

Presently the two first champions appeared who had fought together—one for Clothilde, and the other for Carlotta, and they both called out, "We ignore your Princess Bertha, for it is well known that she is dead. In vain you exhibit your dwarf or puppet, for we have seen her funeral."

"Then," said Hans, at the dictation of Bertha, "it is false; the body was never found, but one of her intriguing sisters, anxious to usurp the crown, gave out to her followers that she had found the body, and ordered a mock funeral."

"Thou liest, thou liest!" shouted the two knights, both at once.

"Let it be put to the proof," said Hans. "Let the coffin be disinterred, and if the body be found therein, I will lose my head on the spot where I stand; but if the body of the princess be not found therein, then shall ye, the champions of the two usurpers, lose *your* heads."

"It would be sacrilege to disturb the dead," said the knights. "We cannot agree to the proposition."

But the people called out, "It is well said; 'tis a fair trial."

The two knights began to remonstrate, but their voices were drowned by the herd, who wished the matter settled by the disinterment of the body.

When the commotion had ceased a little, Hans lifted up his voice, and said to the multitude, being instructed, as usual, by his spouse, "It is the pleasure of the Princess Bertha, whom you now see before you, that she be taken instantly to the presence of the arch-priest of this city, who has known her well from infancy, and who baptized her. He, as you all know, citizens, is a man of good repute. Should he recognise the Princess Bertha, let her have her rights; but if he says it is another like to her, let the coffin of the supposed defunct be opened publicly, that all may be satisfied."

"Sacrilege, sacrilege!" cried the knights.

"No, no!" cried the populace; "the stranger knight has well said. It is most fair. To the arch-priest, to the arch-priest!"

The crowd made room for Hans, and conducted him to the palace of the arch-priest. When the good man saw this great crowd in front of his palace he came out to demand the reason, and was informed that the Princess Bertha, whom all believed to be dead, had returned to the city with

a champion who was ready to maintain her right to the crown, provided that the arch-priest himself, who knew her well, should testify to her identity.

"Show me this champion," said the priest.

Hans then rode up, and holding in his hand the diminutive Princess, placed her in the hands of the arch-priest.

The crowd pressed hard together while the aged priest took out his spectacles and examined the tender form minutely.

"In good sooth," he exclaimed, "it is the Princess Bertha and none other. My fair princess, what treachery has been at work to deprive thee of thy rights?"

"You know me then, holy father?"

"Know thee, daughter," quoth the old man tenderly. "Methinks it were difficult to make a mistake."

"You hear then, O people," cried the little princess, straining her feeble voice to its utmost pitch, till it resembled the squeaking of a fife; "you hear that the venerable arch-priest has recognised me."

"Ay, ay, your royal highness; long life to you, and welcome to the throne!" cried the populace.

Then a great cheering arose.

"Long live the Princess Bertha, our rightful queen!"

But some of the faction for the Princess Clothilde called out, "It is false; she is dead and buried, we will not be imposed upon by this man and his dwarf."

"The arch-priest recognises her," cried others. "The arch-priest dotes; he is mistaken," cried they for the Princess Clothilde.

"Let the coffin of the princess be exhumed!" cried the crowd, and they appealed to the priest, who consented that the coffin should be opened in the presence of all the people.

"Where is the undertaker?" cried one of the crowd.

"Here!" cried a voice.

"Let him come forward."

Then the crowd made room for the undertaker, and one amongst them asked him if he had placed the late princess in the coffin with his own hands.

He replied in the negative.

"Who closed the coffin, then?" asked the former questioner.

"The Princess Clothilde herself," answered the undertaker.

"That seems suspicious," said another; "she also is said to have found the body, which she concealed in her cloak and allowed nobody to see."

"Because," answered one of the faction for

Clothilde, "because the body, being already in an advanced state of decay, she was unwilling to make a disgusting exhibition of the remains of her sister, who she so dearly loved. We are witnesses of her emotion upon finding her sister's body."

"It is false," cried Hans; "the Princess Clothilde is a hypocrite and an usurper, and has plotted to obtain the crown for herself."

"Treason, treason!" cried the faction for Clothilde. But those in favour of the Princess Bertha applauded the words of Hans, and cried out, "We shall see if the remains be in the coffin."

After waiting some little time longer, the coffin was exhumed and given into the hands of the arch-priest, who, standing upon the balcony of his palace, opened the coffin with his penknife in the presence of all the crowd, and found therein nothing but cinders, which he emptied into the street below.

"I hope now, citizens, you are convinced that foul play is at the bottom of it all," said the old priest.

"Ay," cried the crowd, "most vile treachery—down with the Princess Clothilde; we will have none to reign over us but the Princess Bertha."

"Stay a moment," shouted the champion for

the Princess Clothilde. "What was there in the coffin if not the body of the Princess Bertha?"

"Nothing but dust and ashes," answered the arch-priest.

"A sign that decomposition has already taken place," responded the former. "That is no proof that the Princess Bertha was not buried in the coffin."

But the crowd laughed him to scorn, saying that it was scarce a fortnight ago since the princess was missed, and that it was impossible the body should have decomposed so rapidly.

The arch-priest then gave his word of honour to all present that he had found nothing in the coffin but cinders from the grate.

One of the crowd below picked up a cinder which had fallen from the coffin, and cried out, "The holy father speaks the truth, for the coffin contained nothing but cinders of burnt wood."

Then the champion for the Princess Clothilde, fearing that all were siding with Bertha, called out in a loud voice, "Long live the Princess Clothilde!"

But the crowd hissed, and showed signs of disapprobation.

Then the other champion for her twin sister called out, "Long live the Princess Carlotta!" but he, too, was hissed.

Then spake out Hans.

"Whoever objects to the Princess Bertha being queen, let him do battle with me."

Hans then threw down his gauntlet, which was immediately picked up by Clothilde's champion.

Our little princess took refuge once more in her husband's helmet, and whispered in his ear to keep his lance steadily directed towards the breast of his foe, and then, touching him with the wand again, she rendered him proof against all mortal harm.

The adversaries charged together, and so violent was the shock with which Hans came upon his foe, and so accurately did he direct his lance, that the deadly weapon pierced through the massive breast-plate of his enemy and came out at his back.

Hans, whose natural strength was terrific, and which was increased tenfold by the magical touch he had received from his spouse, whirled the dead champion at the point of his lance two or three times round his head, and then flung the body to an incredible distance over the heads of the crowd.

The champion of the Princess Carlotta, seeing the fate of the other champion, would fain have drawn back, for he thought Hans could be none other than the foul fiend himself.

But the crowd cried out to him, "Thou, too, votest for the Princess Carlotta."

"Ay," he was constrained to say.

"Do battle for her, then," said Hans.

Carlotta's champion sullenly laid his lance in rest, and aimed at a portion of Hans' vast body which seemed least protected; but the point of his lance got entangled in the shirt of mail that Hans wore beneath his plate armour without doing further injury to him, while Hans' lance pierced through the left eye of his foe, and passing through the back of his skull, helmet and all, pinned him to the ground, whilst his horse galloped off through the crowd.

Now, the news of the return of their sister and the defeat of their champions soon reached the ears of the twin princesses, who knew not how to contain their rage; but the Princess Clothilde, the more wily and wicked of the two, bribed her followers with large sums of money to feign to vote for the Princess Bertha, and thus make friends with this stranger knight, and invite him into their houses, to offer him a cup of wine after the fatigue of the combat, which, when unobserved, she commanded them to drug, and as soon as he was insensible he was to be carried off to prison and loaded with chains, care being taken to secure the Princess Bertha at the same time.

Hereupon all those who had formerly voted for

the Princess Clothilde commenced to shout, "Long live the Princess Bertha!"

But the little princess, suspecting treachery,—for she recognised the faces of the men who now shouted for her as being the same as before shouted for her sister,—warned her spouse not to receive any man's hospitality but the arch-priest's, telling him that if he disobeyed her command it might cost him his life.

Hans promised to obey, but when he saw so many well-dressed gentlemen of the court come forward to offer him their congratulations, and invite him so cordially to their houses, being very simple and unsuspicious, he forgot the warning of his spouse, though she did all in her power by pinching and biting him to make him remember, and he accepted the invitation of a certain lord, imagining his spouse's vehement urging to be nothing more than the bite of a flea.

"Fool!" cried the princess, "you will ruin both yourself and me"; but Hans paid no attention, for he was hungry and thirsty.

The great lord who had invited Hans to his mansion possessed all the polished manners of a courtier, though he had a very black heart, and easily working himself into Hans' affections, he locked his arm within the arm of Hans, and led him to his home.

"May I also have the honour of entertaining Her Royal Highness the Princess Bertha?" asked the nobleman.

"Oh, yes," said Hans in his simple manner; "she is inside my helmet. I'll bring her, too. You see, she being small and I being large, it is the only way we can discourse together."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the nobleman; "an original idea. By all means let me have the honour of entertaining my princess."

Hans was charmed at the affable manners of the nobleman, and arrived at the mansion, took a seat at the lord's table, where he was introduced to other men of high rank, who all congratulated him on his prowess, and expressed their delight at having made his acquaintance.

A meal was speedily prepared, and wine handed round.

"Drink not," whispered the princess. But Hans, deaf to all counsel in the presence of so many genial companions, accepted glass after glass, until he was in a state bordering on intoxication. Now, Hans was a good man, and a true, but he had one small failing, which was an inclination to tipple.

He could never refuse a good glass of wine when he was among boon companions. He had also a most ravenous appetite, and afforded the

other guests much amusement by the clownish manner in which he devoured his food, as well as by his brutal stupidity and broad peasant's brogue.

When the wine had loosened his tongue a little he soon informed the nobleman of his former condition, saying he was no knight of the court, but a humble woodcutter, and would take no notice of the signs made to him by the princess to keep quiet (who now, by the by, was seated on the table before him, Hans having unbuckled his helmet), but went on eating and drinking, and chatting and laughing, in a manner ill-suited to his dignity as champion, to say nothing of husband to the princess.

The Princess Bertha was treated with the respect due to her rank, and pressed to partake of something, but she refused, pleading no appetite.

When the host observed that the wine had got into Hans' head, he motioned to some of the guests to engage the princess in conversation while he administered the drug.

Then, taking a paper containing a powder from his pocket, he emptied it into a goblet of wine which he offered to Hans.

But the princess, who observed this, said to the host, "May it please your lordship to drink first this toast—'To the prosperity of our kingdom.'"

The nobleman looked confused, and stammered out that he hoped that Her Royal Highness would excuse him, as he, a humble individual, could not think of tasting the cup before so illustrious a guest.

"Then you refuse to do me this small favour, my lord?" said Bertha.

But before the host had time to reply Hans had already grasped the goblet greedily and drained it dry. The effect was not immediate, but after about twenty minutes Hans fell back in his chair in a state of the most perfect insensibility.

"I am afraid," said the host, "that your Royal Highness's brave champion has partaken a little too freely of the contents of my cellar. It is an accident that is apt to befall the best of us. I am sorry for his state, though I cannot but feel it a compliment to my wine."

The princess answered not save by a look of scorn. Then, fearing that the nobleman would offer to remove her to another room while he procured men to remove the helpless body of her spouse, as well as secure her person, and bring her, in spite of herself, into her sister's power, who was sure to make away with her secretly, she touched herself with her wand, and instantly she became invisible.

The lord searched the chamber in every corner, for his first object was to make himself master of

the person of the princess, but failing in finding her, he next began to unbuckle Hans' armour, and examined every plate as he stripped him of it in his careful search for the tiny princess. He grew more puzzled than ever at not finding her, and ordered the other lordlings to search the house. This they did for an hour or more without success, when, fearing that Hans might awaken from his trance, he ordered a litter to be brought, upon which he securely bound our champion.

The helpless knight was then borne upon the shoulders of four strong men, and carried to the common prison, where he was fettered hand and foot, and left in a dungeon, deep, damp, and chilly, being in a state of unconsciousness all the while. The princess, however, though invisible, followed her husband. If she had chosen, she could have rendered him also invisible, and spirited him away out of harm's reach, but she would not.

"No," she said to herself, "let him reap the fruits of his folly. He will learn better by experience than by my precepts. I will not come forward to help him until the last."

Now, when Hans was left alone in his cell—that is to say, alone save the invisible presence of his spouse—it was already getting late. The effect of the potion was to last for five hours, during the

whole of which time—and who knew how much longer—the princess was doomed to breathe the damp air of a dungeon and to wallow in the filth therein, shivering with cold; without a fire, without her supper, and frightened to death lest the large rats that infested the prison should make their supper off her or her husband; but she recollected the wand.

The first thing she wanted was a light, for it was pitch dark, not merely because it was night but because the dungeon was underground. Feeling a stone at her foot, she touched it with her wand, and it became a candle, so brilliant as to light up the whole cell perfectly; but what should she do for a fire? There was no fireplace or stove, no place where the smoke might escape.

"With this wand, I shall want for nothing," she said, and touching the wall of the prison, that part of it was instantly converted into a magnificent fireplace, with a chimney and a most comfortable fire.

She proceeded to warm herself, but soon she felt there lacked something. She was hungry, so she touched the ground, and instantly there arose a little table spread with a white tablecloth, and a little chair just big enough for herself. Still, there was nothing on the table as yet, save empty plates, with knives and fork, but at that moment she

noticed a great rat gnawing her husband's toe. She hastened to drive it away, and in doing so touched it with her wand, when it became a roast hare.

Then, touching a stone, it became a loaf of bread. A piece of bottle glass that she found on the dungeon floor became a bottle of wine; and finding there were no vegetables, she changed a blue-bottle fly into a dish of spinach; a spider into some turnips; and a handful of earth from the floor into some salt, after which she proceeded to carve.

Having partaken sufficiently of the first course, she changed the remains of the hare into an apple tart, and the vegetables into different sorts of fruit. Thus she obtained all she required.

Having finished her supper, the princess waved her wand, and the supper table, with everything on it, chair and all, disappeared through the floor; then, seating herself by the fire, she waited for her spouse to awake.

In about three hours her worse half opened his eyes, and stretching his gigantic limbs, gazed about him in stupefied astonishment.

"Where am I?" he asked, with a yawn.

"Where thou deservest to be," answered the princess, with severity, drawing herself up to her full height. "A pretty position, I ween, for the queen's consort—drugged and cast into prison! Maybe

that another time thou wilt pay more attention to my words; but the worst has not come yet. Thou art to be handed over to the malice of my two sisters. Who knows in what manner they may reek their vengeance? If thou escapest with thy life, thou wilt be fortunate.

"Prepare, then, for thou hast brought all this on thyself by despising my counsels. What! is a man like thee to be at the head of the realm? *Thou*, with thy brutish appetite, thy dense stupidity and deafness to the voice of wisdom? A pretty example to thy subjects, forsooth! Or thinkest thou that the strength of thine arm alone will suffice to govern the kingdom? I tell thee, brainless boor, that whatever your besotted notion of a king may be, it is a post that is no easy task to fill, and woe to him who aspires to the title and is not able to discharge the duties belonging to it.

"Knowest thou not futurity will judge thy action, that thy name is destined either to honour or disgrace the page of history? That a king must not only be brave, but wise, just, good, merciful, temperate?"

"Enough, O royal spouse, most august princess," answered Hans. "Enough for the present; but tell me first how I came here, and next how to get out again, and for the future I will always listen to thy

counsels, though allow me to observe that it was thy will to make a king of me rather than mine own; therefore, if thou hast hit upon the wrong man, methinks the blame is thine. An I had known when I was an humble woodchopper that to be a king I must bear this splitting headache, lie in a dungeon full of rats, to be hanged perhaps on the morrow, besides having to kill so many good hearty fellows just because they happen to differ a little in opinion from your Royal Highness, I should have said, 'The devil take all the kings and kingdoms in the world; I'll e'en abide here and chop wood.'"

"Hush!" cried the princess, with asperity, "and offend not our royal ears with such clownish sentiments. It is but natural that thy rude nature should rebel against counsel that is intended for thy good. It is to be hoped, however, that with time thou mayest be brought to a right view of the great destiny that thou hast to fulfil.

"I confess that had I not been specially commanded in a dream by the queen of the fairies to take thee and raise thee to the throne, I should never of myself have chosen so clownish a helpmate."

"Well, for the matter of that," said Hans, "dreams are things that I don't often trouble my head about, as I never had one come true in my

life. Many is the time I've dreamed I had my pocket full of gold, and waking in the morning, devil a groat have I found within it; but maybe it is not so with you princesses, who are a different sort of grain to us poor beggars; and perhaps fairies appear to you in dreams and tell the truth; but whether that is or is not, I know not, being no scholar."

"Well, Hans," said the princess, "thou art not far wrong in not trusting to every dream, or in believing there are certain privileged individuals to whom dreams are given as a warning, as consolation, or as prediction of good fortune; but thou oughtest no longer to doubt, after what thou hast seen and gone through, that thou thyself since thy nuptials hast been under the protection of the good fairies.

"Has not everything gone right so long as thou didst hearken to my voice; and did not thy good luck desert thee solely when thou didst refuse to listen to my warning?"

"Well, wife," said Hans, "I believe thou art about right, may my axe lop off my limbs if I'll ever be such a fool again."

"Hush, sir!" said his spouse. "No oaths in the presence of royalty, if you please. Such language befits not the mouth of a king."

"Well, well, have it thine own way," said Hans. "I'll try to improve, only let me have a little sleep now—I am tired."

"That's right, husband mine," said the princess, seeing that he was more docile; "I do not quite despair of thee yet. Thou mayest be the right man after all. The fairies know better than I. Sleep, and arise to-morrow a wiser man. Yet another thing thou must bear in mind, however, thou must try to unlearn that horrid peasant's brogue of thine. Dost hear?"

"Ay, that will I, royal spouse," replied Hans, in a brogue as broad as before. Then, turning on his side, was soon fast asleep. The princess, however, slept not a wink that night; the excitement of the day and the thoughts of what might possibly occur on the morrow kept her wide awake, and thus she remained until the morning, when she was suddenly alarmed by the sound of footsteps, and four men entered.

Bertha instantly made herself invisible again. The foremost of these men advancing, and shaking Hans roughly out of his sleep, informed him that it was the pleasure of the princesses that he should be brought instantly before them. Hans started up, and would have been violent, but his chains prevented him.

"Where is the princess?" asked he, looking round him.

"What princess?" asked the man.

"The Princess Bertha—our future queen, and my lawful wife," replied Hans.

"The Princess Bertha!" exclaimed one.

"Your wife!" laughed another.

"Why, the man's mad, or else is not quite sober yet," cried a third.

"Stay," said the fourth; "it is possible he has got the dwarf princess concealed about his person. So much the better, we shall get them both together, and divide the reward between us. Let us search him."

"Ha! is that so?" said the first.

A rigid search was made on the person of Hans, but they found not the princess.

"Hold there, ruffians!" cried Hans. "Ye shall do the princess no harm. Do you hear; for, besides being your rightful queen, she is my wife."

A general laugh ensued. Hans was no less puzzled than the men themselves at her disappearance.

"Where can she be?" quoth he. "All last night she was watching beside me, like a true wife, and now"—

"Come, the fellow is dreaming still, or else

trying to befool us," cried one of the men, at length. "Let us hasten with him to the princess."

Hans was then conducted into the palace, and led into an amphitheatre, where the late king was wont to listen to stage plays, singing, recitations, and such like.

The theatre was crowded, and in a conspicuous place he noticed the Princess Clothilde and her sister Carlotta.

"Welcome, Sir Peasant Knight. Welcome, Sir Woodchopper," said the princesses mockingly.

"We have heard of your great deeds of yesterday, Sir Knight," said the Princess Clothilde. "Surely such bravery deserves a reward."

Then, turning to one of the men who accompanied Hans, she added: "Give the brave knight the reward he merits."

The men had previously been instructed how Hans was to be treated, so one of them proceeded to strip him to the waist, whilst another took from behind a column a cat-o'-nine-tails, with which he belaboured the naked shoulders of our knight with such force that he drew blood at every stroke, while the spectators applauded and the princesses laughed.

Hans bore his flogging without wincing, though his back was streaming with blood. The Princess

Bertha was with her husband all the while, though invisible. She was touched at the cruel spectacle, and her blood rose in indignation against her sisters, yet she would not yet come forward to assist her husband. He had been in the wrong, and he must take the consequences of his folly. She pitied him from her heart; she admired, too, the fortitude with which he endured such pain and indignity; but she had his good in view.

She knew that, as a child is taught to know better another time by one good flogging, so her husband, who was nothing but a child in mind, must be cured by the same remedy.

"The loss of a little blood, as our leeches say, is good for the health occasionally," remarked Clothilde. "Besides, as your knighthood is well aware, a knight, whose trade it is to shed blood, must not wince if now and then a little of his own is shed."

"How thinkest thou, Sir Knight," asked Carlotta, "that a back *sanglant* would look in thine escutcheon?"

These, and such like gibes were thrown at Hans, who treated them all with silent contempt.

At length Bertha, observing by the countenance of her spouse that he had had enough, thought it high time that the tables should be turned, and the

spectators punished for their barbarity, so she whispered thus in her husband's ear—

"I am with thee. Now that thou has suffered the consequences of thy disobedience, take thy revenge upon thine enemies."

So saying, she touched his fetters with her wand, and they snapped.

Hans needed not this prompting. Finding himself free, his suppressed wrath having increased his natural strength to that of a Titan, he sprang up the steps of the amphitheatre, and seizing the throat of the Princess Clothilde with his right hand and that of her sister with his left, he squeezed them with such force, that it was a wonder both were not killed outright. However, they certainly would have been, had not one of the lords, whom Hans recognised as the same false lord who had invited him to his house, and afterwards drugged him, instantly interfered.

Hans left go the throats of the princesses, who fell, to all appearances, dead, and who did not recover till long after, and, seizing the sword of the false lord, which he had drawn against him, he snapped it in two across his knee, and threw the pieces into the arena. Then, seizing the lord himself by the collar and by the seat of his hose, he flung him with such violence over the heads of the people, that he

fell headforemost after his sword, and his brains were dashed out.

Shouts of "Murder!" and "Treason!" were heard on all sides.

"Seize the miscreant!"

The four men who had led Hans before the princesses came forward, and would have secured him, but Hans, brandishing in one hand a piece of broken chain of great weight, broke the skull of the foremost, the back of the second, the ribs of the third, and the shins of the fourth.

Some few others now attempted to seize Hans, but their was something so terrible in his aspect as he furiously fought his way through the crowd, knocking down one with his fist and another with his chain, that they prudently drew back, and every spectator took refuge in flight before the ungovernable fury of Hans.

Then the Princess Bertha, making herself again visible, ordered Hans to carry her to her two sisters, who had just recovered consciousness. Standing upright in the palm of her husband's hand, she addressed them thus—

"Are ye not ashamed of yourselves to treat a brave knight in this spiteful manner? Mean spirits that ye are; but ye are rightly served. Nor is this all; there is more in store for ye. Your ambitious

scheming is seen through, and the good powers protect the right. Ye shall live yet to see me crowned, together with this man, whom I now declare to be my husband. The coronation will take place to-morrow, in spite of all your puny schemes. Farewell!"

The two princesses were so enraged at the words and bearing of their little sister whom they had persecuted, that they knew not what to reply, but turned red and pale by turns, stamped their feet, bit their hands, tore their hair, and screamed.

"Let us go to the arch-priest," said Bertha to her spouse. "Go just as thou art, half-naked and bleeding. All the world shall know how these princesses treat brave knights."

So saying, the Princess Bertha left the amphitheatre in the hand of her gigantic husband, leaving her two envious sisters behind, foaming with rage.

Hans hastened through the streets, his back covered with weals and streaming with blood, towards the palace of the arch-priest. The people recognised him as the knight who had vanquished the champions of the twin princesses on the day before, and asked him how he came in such plight.

Then Hans, being instructed by Bertha, answered thus—

"Good people, you all see in me the champion

of the Princess Bertha, who is ready to shed his last drop of blood for her sake; and these wounds that you see have not been inflicted in a fair fight, but by treachery. After I vanquished the two champions of the twin princesses several lords of the court came forward to congratulate me on my success, and invited me into their houses. I, contrary to the orders of our most august princess, whom I now hold before ye (cheers from the populace), and who, more wily than I, suspected treachery—contrary to her orders, I trusted too easily to false appearances, and accepted the hospitality of one of them. He invited me to his house, gave me to eat and to drink, and when I had well eaten and drunk, he drugged my cup, and cast me into a dungeon underground, where I remained all night, and was fetched away this morning, loaded with chains, only to be brought into the presence of the two usurping princesses and flogged before the whole court.

"But it pleased the good powers to loosen my chains, and I have given some few of them their deserts. Follow me, all ye that love justice, and proclaim the right of the Princess Bertha to the crown."

"Long live the Princess Bertha, our rightful queen," cried the mob.

"Prince Hans, our rightful king," cried the princess. "I here declare in the presence of all men that I am already married to this brave knight!"

Tumultuous cheering ensued this speech of the little princess, and shouts of "Long live King Hans and Queen Bertha" followed them until they arrived at the palace of the arch-priest. Hans knocked at the door. The servant who opened it started back in surprise and horror at the half-naked and bleeding figure of the visitor.

"What do you want?" he asked rudely, as yet not noticing the princess.

"I want the arch-priest. Who else did you think I wanted," responded Hans, equally roughly.

"The arch-priest is not at home to everyone," said the menial haughtily. "What's your business?"

"Come, let us in immediately, and don't stand prating there. I am the Princess Bertha," said the dwarf princess.

"I crave your Royal Highness's pardon," said the servant, bowing low. "I did not observe you," and he allowed our pair to enter without further opposition.

"What is all this?" exclaimed the arch-priest, who came to meet them. "My little princess, with her champion naked and bleeding!"

"Holy father," said the princess, "we wish to be crowned to-morrow. See that preparations are made for the occasion."

The arch-priest bowed to the ground.

"Your Royal Highness's will is law. Is there no further obstacle to the coronation?"

"None; and if there were, I'd conquer it as I have done the rest. See that my spouse and I are crowned to-morrow in presence of all the people," said the princess.

"Your spouse!" exclaimed the arch-priest. "I knew nothing of it. He is not what he seems, then —he is of royal blood?"

"Royal blood or not, he is my lawful spouse, and he is to be crowned," said the princess, firmly.

"But, my dear princess," answered the priest, "if he is not of royal blood, how can I?"

"Enough," said Bertha. "I have the warrant of the queen of the fairies that he is to be my partner in life. Here is my certificate of marriage."

And she produced a paper five or six times as big as herself, which she handed to the priest.

The priest opened it, and glanced through it.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Then he really is of royal blood. I see. What is this paper enclosed? Ha! a pedigree." And he began to read, "Prince

Hans Wurst, son of King Blut Wurst, lost in early youth and picked up by a woodcutter, with whom"—

"You see," said the princess, "how the fairies befriend me. This second paper must have been placed here by their hands, for this is the first time I have set eyes upon it. Are you content with the information therein contained?" asked the Princess Bertha.

"Perfectly, your Royal Highness," said the arch-priest, bowing.

"To-morrow, then, it must take place, father," said the princess.

"Without delay," replied the priest. "But, tell me, what on earth brings His Royal Highness Prince Hans here in this pitiable plight?"

Bertha then began to recount the misadventures of her knight and the spite of her envious sisters, the detailing of which filled the poor old priest with horror.

"But, at any rate," said he, at the conclusion of the narrative, "let the prince's wounds be healed. Send for a surgeon."

"A surgeon! Bah!" cried the princess. "Behold, sir priest, what one favoured by the fairies can do," and thus saying, she touched her husband's back with her wand, and it instantly

healed so that none could see even the slightest scratch.

"Gramercy!" quoth the arch-priest; "I never before beheld such a miracle. Thou art indeed favoured of the higher powers."

"Does that surprise thee, holy father? Behold another wonder," said Bertha, and she touched the back of Hans a second time with her wand, and instantly her semi-nude champion was covered from head to foot in an elegant royal dress, composed of a crimson velvet tunic, half-way to the knee, and trimmed with ermine, and silken hose of a buff colour.

A gold-hilted sword, in the form of a cross, hung by his side, within a bejewelled scabbard, likewise a dagger. A chain of massive gold about his neck, and a graceful barrette, with a white ostrich feather, which was fastened by a huge diamond. The arch-priest started back several paces, rubbed his eyes, and, looking first at the princess and then at Hans, and then at the princess again, he took her in his hand, and whispered in her ear that he hoped it was not witchcraft, and being assured by Bertha that it was not, he smiled, and congratulated Prince Hans on his improved appearance.

Hans, suddenly discovering that he had under-

gone a change, called for a mirror, and was shown into another chamber, where there stood one large enough for him to look at himself at full length. Our prince began to admire himself, and to cut all sorts of capers, at which the arch-priest laughed heartily; but Bertha reproved her spouse for his levity, and told him such antics did not become a king.

The prince immediately ceased his tricks, and taking leave of the arch-priest respectfully, left his palace with his little wife in the breast of his tunic.

As he opened the palace door, he saw standing at the gate his own charger, gaily bedizened. The animal had been sent to await him at the arch-priest's palace by the fairies. Hans mounted, and proceeded to show himself to everyone through the streets of the city, while the crowd shouted, "Long live King Hans and Queen Bertha!"

Now, Bertha knew her twin sisters too well not to suspect them of treachery up to the very last.

"It is certain," said she to herself, "that they have sent spies after us. They will not rest until Hans, at least, is killed."

Looking round in the crowd, she spied a man whose face pleased her not, and who glanced furtively at Hans. She observed, too, that he carried a long rope with a slip-knot over his arm.

Her natural penetration told her that danger would proceed from that quarter, so, touching her husband's neck with her wand, she said :—

" Be as hard as iron and as immovable as a rock."

They rode on together till they came to a large square, when suddenly the man with the rope, watching his opportunity, threw the cord over the heads of the people, so that the slip-knot fixed itself round the throat of Hans, and the man pulled with all his might and main to throttle him and to drag him from his seat ; but, instead of accomplishing his object, the rope did no more harm to Hans' neck than had it been the trunk of a tree, while the horse and his rider proceeded as before, dragging the man behind after them ; nor could he leave go the rope, for the princess had wrought a charm on him, and thus he was dragged through the city in the sight of all men, hooted and pelted by the crowd as he was dragged along.

As for Hans, he felt the rope no more than had it been a spider's web. The report of the strength of Hans' neck spread throughout the land, and all declared that that alone was sufficient to qualify him for the crown ; accordingly, on the following day great preparations were already made for the coronation, which was to take place in the cathedral of the town.

The doors of the church were crammed with the equipages of all the lords and ladies in the land, amongst which were the carriages of the Princesses Clothilde and Carlotta, who had arrived, each with an escort of armed men, to prevent the coronation of their sister, but the mob was so violently in favour of the Princess Bertha, that the escorts were beaten back. The little princess, however, gave orders that her sisters were to be admitted, so the twin princesses took their seats to witness the ceremony.

Now, a man had been bribed by them to be close to the person of the prince all the time, and the moment the crown was being placed upon his head to stab him in the back; but Bertha, still suspicious of treachery, looked around her and saw the man, who was just in the act of assassinating her husband, when, waving her wand in time, she converted his dagger into a venemous serpent, which twisted itself round his body, and bit him that he died.

Great was the uproar and surprise at this scene, and the crowd were ready to tear the twin princesses to pieces; but the arch-priest commanded them to forbear, and the ceremony proceeded without opposition.

Suddenly soft music was heard throughout the

cathedral, and a perfume as of incense arose. Then a sunbeam from one of the upper windows in the church revealed an innumerable multitude of little fairies, two of which carried a little crown between them, just big enough for the head of the pigmy queen.

The multitude was struck with awe and the two sisters filled with fury at the sight; but the ceremony passed off quietly. Nevertheless, the twin princesses, dreading the mob, stepped hastily into their respective carriages, and drove back to the palace.

When King Hans and Queen Bertha drove off in their carriage, which, by the way, was made by the fairies themselves for the occasion, the mob was half-blinded by the brilliancy of the jewels with which it was inlaid, and our new sovereigns were cheered by the crowd till they arrived at the palace door.

Now, the two princesses, instead of yielding up the palace to the rightful owners, had ordered the door to be barricaded and entrance refused to the royal pair, which, when Bertha discovered, she immediately waved her wand in front of the palace, and changed it into a prison filled with gloomy cells, and the gay clothes of the people within into the squalid garments of prisoners, while the golden

bracelets of the princesses became manacles for their wrists, and their garters fetters for their feet.

Then, waving her wand in the direction of the prison in which her husband had been confined, which stood not far off, it became a magnificent palace, equal, if not superior, in grandeur to that which she erected upon the ruins of the wizard's castle, so that all wondered, and shouted, "Welcome to Queen Bertha, and down with the twin princesses!"

The man who had attempted the life of Prince Hans with his lasso on the day before was publicly hanged with his own rope on the roof of the prison, where the two princesses now languished, as an example to all rebels.

After the wicked princesses had been imprisoned for a week the tiny queen released them on condition that they should flee the country and not show their faces again. The sisters heard their sentence in sullen silence, and quitted the country shortly afterwards, amid the curses of the crowd, and established themselves in a foreign land, where, out of spite, they gave themselves over to witchcraft, and leagued with the queen of the witches, who was also exiled there, to work all sorts of spells upon their sister from afar; but they all

failed, as the pigmy queen was too powerfully protected by the fairies.

King Hans grew in wisdom every day under the sage counsel of his spouse, till at length his subjects bestowed on him the name of "The wisest and the bravest king living."

In proportion as Hans' intelligence and good manners improved, grew the love of Bertha for her husband. They soon knew how to appreciate and respect each other, till at length there was not a more loving couple in the whole world.

About a year after King Hans and Queen Bertha had ascended the throne a war broke out between his and a neighbouring country. The latter was the same land where the wicked princesses had fled into exile, and this was to be the seat of war.

One day, as the queen was seated in the boudoir of the palace in a pensive attitude, while her husband was putting on his armour, previous to departing for the war, she was startled by a sound of chattering, screeching, and the fluttering of wings. As she was about to ring the bell for the servant to inquire the meaning of this strange noise the door opened, and an ape and crow entered, followed by a large spider, which, making towards the queen and bowing low, cried out,

"A boon, a boon! O gracious queen, according to thy promise."

And immediately the little queen recognised the ape that had escaped with her from the hands of the showman and carried her to the top of a tree, the crow that had carried her down again and left her on the banks of a stream, and the spider that had saved her life by catching her in its web and carrying her safely to the bottom of the precipice, when her cruel sister Clothilde thought to rid herself for ever of her rival by precipitating her into the lake below. She remembered that she had promised a boon to all three when she came to be queen.

"A boon, a boon!" chattered the monkey.

"A boon, a boon!" screeched the crow.

"A boon, a boon!" whispered the spider, whose voice was less strong than the other two, being an insect.

"What boon do ye ask?" demanded her majesty. "Change us to our proper forms again!" cried all at once. "We have heard that thou possessest a fairy wand. Disenchant us, O Queen, and give us back our natural forms."

Queen Bertha then waving her wand over the head of each, they suddenly resumed their respective shapes. The ape and the spider became two

handsome youths, while the crow took the form of a comely and dignified matron in the habiliments of a queen. Each of the two youths recognised the other, though after a lapse of many years, as his lost brother, and rushed into each other's arms.

The venerable lady who had hitherto figured as a crow, but who was neither more nor less than a queen herself, recognised in these two youths her long lost sons, and they, in their turn, recognised the late crow as their mother, and fell upon her neck and kissed her. The old queen wept for joy, and knew not how to thank Bertha for what she had done.

"O favoured of the fairies!" pleaded the mother of the two princes, "think me not bold if I further trespass on thy benevolence and crave another boon."

"Ask, and it is granted," quoth the smaller queen.

"I have yet another son and I know not what has become of him—my eldest boy—also three daughters, whom the queen witch has metamorphosed into a bat, a toad, and an owl. Let me set eyes again on my eldest son, if he, indeed, be living, and prithee, O gracious queen, disenchant my daughters."

"It shall be done," responded the pigmy queen,

and waving her wand, there immediately flew through the window, which was open, an owl and a bat, the owl bearing in its beak a toad by the leg, which it immediately dropped on entering the royal boudoir, and the three stood in a row before Bertha.

"Obnoxious beings," said the pigmy queen, "resume your respective forms."

So saying, she waved her wand over each, and they were suddenly converted into three beautiful maidens, who immediately recognising their mother and their two brothers fell into their arms and devoured them with kisses.

At the same moment that the three unsightly objects made their appearance at the window the door opened, and in walked—who? Hans, clad in complete armour, and the old queen recognised her lost eldest son. Hans remained stupefied at the group before him; then, when everything was explained, he wept upon his mother's neck, and embraced his brothers and sisters.

But Hans had little time to lose; his army was about to march, so taking a hasty farewell of his relatives, he placed his diminutive spouse within his helmet, as was his wont, and mounted his charger. His two younger brothers, Otto and Oscar, were determined to follow him to battle, so

Queen Bertha changed two black pigs that had strayed into the palace garden, and were uprooting the plants, into two fiery war horses, nobly caparisoned, and the three brothers started for the war, while their mother and three sisters waved their handkerchiefs after them until they were out of sight, and uttered prayers for their safe return.

Now this war had been brought about by the evil spells of the queen witch and Bertha's two malicious sisters, who, wishing to avenge themselves on their pigmy sister, caused the monarch in whose country they lived to pick a quarrel with King Hans, which should lead to a war, by which they hoped to be the gainers. But Hans and Bertha were in favour with the good fairies, and the luck was, as usual, on their side.

The foreign monarch's city was besieged, and many put to the sword. The king himself, together with the witch queen and the two wicked sisters were taken prisoners. The witch queen was burnt alive publicly, as a punishment for her many sins, and the twin sisters imprisoned for life.

Queen Bertha was naturally of a benevolent disposition, and would have pardoned her sisters, but her prudence conquered this feeling, and she deemed it expedient to put it out of their power to do harm to anyone by shutting them up in prison,

where, after languishing for some years, they died still impenitent.

After the death of the witch queen the spell which she had wrought upon Bertha while yet unborn was broken, and the pigmy queen took suddenly to growing, and increased each day six inches in height, till she reached the stature of an ordinary full-grown woman.

She preserved her surpassing beauty till her death, and lived to bless her husband with a family of twelve children.

Hans' two brothers returned unhurt from battle, and lived with their mother and sisters in the splendid palace that Bertha had raised on the spot where had stood the wizard's castle.

King Hans lived to a good old age, and died a good man and wise monarch.

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